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Angelica
Elisabeth
Sanxay Holding





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Property of.

Genay F. Guibert



ANGELICA

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

By
Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

ANGELICA

ROSALEEN AMONG THE
ARTISTS

INVINCIBLE MINNIE

George H. Doran Company
New York

ANGELICA

BY

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING



NEW

YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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BY ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

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TO

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RESTLESS SEEKER FOR ROMANCE
IS DEDICATED THIS STORY
OF THE END OF A
ROMANCE

ANGELICA

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Mrs. Kennedy got up from her knees, wrung out the filthy and dripping cloth in her hands, and looked back with a sigh over the stairs she had just cleaned.

"It'll have to do," she said, "until to-morrow."

Then, pail in hand, she descended to the basement and pushed open with her foot the door of her flat—three black little rooms with barred windows on a lugubrious air-shaft, where great ash-cans stood and cats prowled and tradesmen went whistling by with bags and bottles. A tiny jet of gas flickered in the passage to light her as she staggered along to the kitchen, there to set down the heavy pail with a jerk that sent a flood of dirty water over her feet.

"Oh, Lord!" she sighed again, patiently.

She lit the gas and looked about her. There in the sink were the dishes from breakfast; and across the tin covers of the wash-tubs scurried a multitude of roaches, disturbed as they feasted on the crumbs there. All this deeply disturbed her, for she was a good housewife, and a neat little body altogether; but she knew herself to be blameless. It couldn't be helped.

As janitress of this Harlem apartment-house, she was permitted to live rent free in exchange for certain services, and her honour was engaged. She had to keep up the ap-

pearance of the place. She had to scrub the stairs, the corridors, the vestibule, to clean the windows on the five landings. She had also to sweep the vacant flats and display them to any one who came to look at them.

After this was done, there was still her living to make. She did "charing" by the day and half-day; she took home washing to be done at night; she did all those dirty and unpleasant tasks which even the shabby tenants of this shabby house couldn't endure to do for themselves. There were many days when she left her dismal little place early in the morning and wasn't able to re-enter it until after dark. It gave her a feeling of terrible discouragement to come home to it like this, all in disorder and sordid confusion. The thought of it would haunt her all day as she worked.

It was late, as she saw by the clock, but she felt obliged to rest, just for a minute. She sat down and closed her eyes. She couldn't really rest until fatigue was gone and she was refreshed; the best she might expect was some little respite from her labour.

She was a thin little woman of limitless endurance; she could suffer everything; but her drawn, hollow-cheeked face, her faded eyes, gave testimony to the cost of her dreadful and heroic struggle. She was forty, but she looked sixty. She had a blurred look, like a partially erased drawing. She seemed literally worn out, rubbed thin, part of her vanished.

The clock struck six, and she jumped up.

"Oh, Lord!" she sighed again. "Well, I'll make myself a cup of tea first thing; then I'll run out to the corner and get a bite of something for Angelica's supper."

The tea did her good. She felt warmed and comforted, and a little less reluctant to undertake more work. Then, with a shawl over her head, she hurried out into the windy March street, to the little grocer's on the corner.

It was a sore temptation to linger there, where it was warm and brightly lighted, and there were people to talk with, and the young man was so agreeable to her. She was a favourite

of his, in spite of her buying so little, for she was a civil little woman who gave no trouble and always had her mind made up before coming into the shop. But, with her usual little sigh, she tore herself away, bade the young man good night, and hurried home again.

To her eyes even Eighth Avenue, with the tawdry little shops crowded with the very poor, or the very careless, buying their dinners at the last instant, looked festive, looked enticing. She didn't get out much; she hadn't even a window through which she could see the street. She thought to herself that it would be nice to take a walk after supper with Angelica, to look in the windows to see what the fruit-seller had to offer, to view the absorbing display in the five-and-ten-cent store; but she was quite sure that Angelica couldn't be induced to do any such thing. *She* required something better than that!

It was the spur of Angelica's requirements that drove forward the weary Mrs. Kennedy. If she didn't have things nice, Angelica would rearrange and do over until she was suited. She didn't complain much, but wasn't she exacting! Like a man, her mother used to say. She'd never be satisfied with a cup of tea and some little thing you'd maybe have left from the day before. Plenty of variety there must be, and a clean cloth, too.

She was brisk and deft about her preparations when she got home; but she wasn't quite prepared when the bell rang three times, by way of announcement only, as the door was always unlatched, and into the kitchen came her daughter Angelica—her only child.

Angelica was not regarded by her peers as beautiful, for the quality of her beauty was not obvious. She was looked at, stared at, fiercely desired; she was often enough followed in the street; and yet not one of these admirers would have called her beautiful. There was "something about her," that was all—something not to be resisted. She herself was only dimly aware of it. She knew well enough that she was

alluring, that she possessed some enchantment to enthrall men. She knew by some instinct how to use her charm, but she didn't comprehend it or appreciate it. She regarded herself with a pleased and wondering interest. A pale, narrow face with strange black eyes, not quite alike; a rich, scornfully curling mouth; the mysterious, adorable languor of an old Italian Madonna—an exciting languor, like that of a drowsy panther; and with this curious and touching beauty went a swaggering impudence, the speech, the gestures of a thorough gamine. Then there was her walk, the exaggerated suppleness of her thin young body, the rakish tilt of her broad-brimmed hat, the movement of her skirts, and a naïve wickedness that seemed shocking, almost blasphemous, in conjunction with that wonderful face.

And it was this air of bravado, this gamine swagger, which she fancied was her charm. The poetry of her, the exquisite subtleness of her face, she didn't recognize. Her mother alone had some inexpressible and formless idea of this. She saw something rare and heart-breaking in her child, something that robbed her of any pretense of authority.

"Tired?" she asked her now.

"No!" said Angelica scornfully. "Bacon? That's nice. Have it good and crisp, mommer. No, I'm not tired—only sort of *sick* of things."

She sat down before the table and waited, her chin on her hand, somber, frowning, in a mood which her mother knew well and dreaded. She put the plates on the table and stood, waiting, too nervous to eat. She could see that Angelica had something on her mind, and there would be no peace till she had got rid of it.

"Hurry up and eat, mommer," she said impatiently; "so we can go to the movies after."

"I haven't any money, deary."

"I'll pay."

Her mother was startled. How could Angelica have money to spare on a Thursday?

"I got paid off," said Angelica.

"*Discharged*, Angie? I thought you were doing so well——"

"Discharged nothing! I quit."

"But what in the world—— It was a good job, wasn't it? You said it was."

A sudden and vivid expression of disgust lit up her child's face.

"My Gawd, mommer! I got so *sick* of it! Sitting at that machine, all day and every day. Those girls—and the fellers! So blame sick of it, mommer! I don't know—I got thinking. It seems to me maybe I could do better somewhere else."

"They're all about the same, I guess—those factories. I can't see what good it'll do you to be changing so often, Angelica. The girls are all the same; unless maybe you could get into one of the big stores, and they don't pay near as much."

"What's the good of that? Just as bad. No, mommer, I want—something different. Oh, mommer, I want to get something *out* of life!"

Her mother looked at her in silence. She comprehended her perfectly. Hadn't she been like that herself long, long ago—restless, hungry for life, forever seeking something new? Not, of course, in this foreign and vehement way. She had never been capable of speaking so crudely, so violently, as her child; but though they hadn't a feature, a gesture, an intonation alike, they partook of the same indomitable spirit.

"I know!" she said. "It's hard—terrible hard; but it's only worse if you're always fighting against it. There's no chance for people like us, and we've got to put up with it. We can't get what we want. Whatever kind of work you choose, it'll be just as hard."

Angelica, her head in her hands, was looking straight before her.

"I don't see," she began, "why I shouldn't *try*, anyway, to go up instead of down."

"There's no call to go down," said her mother; "but you'll find it hard enough just to keep the same. You've got to be—well, Angelica, as my mother used to say she'd been taught in the old country—you've got to be contented to stay in the station where it has pleased God to put you."

"God made a mistake, then. He's put me in the wrong station, and I won't stay in it. And anyway, mommer, haven't you ever thought? We're not staying—we're going down, down, all the time. You're not where your mother was, and I'm not where you used to be."

"You've got more brains than me, and——"

"I'm not talking about brains. You're *better* than me; you talk better, and you've got nicer ways. You're——" She flushed a little. "You're more like a—lady than me."

Mrs. Kennedy flushed, too, but couldn't deny it. She had before her mind's eye the descent of her family—how she had sunk below her parents' level, just as Angelica had grown up coarser and more ignorant than herself. Unaccountably there came to her the memory of another afternoon when she had been scrubbing stairs, like to-day, but in the home of her girlhood; a summer afternoon, long, long ago. She remembered that she had complained of being tired out, and her mother had bidden her go up-stairs and lie down. And she remembered—how well!—stretching herself out on the bed in the neat, darkened room, and her stout, kindly mother bringing her up a cup of tea.

Her thoughts lingered with her mother, a sober Scotch-woman, living out her life in the shelter of her own home. A nice home, too; a little frame house in Brooklyn, comfortably furnished, modest, but not without dignity. The suppers there, her mother, her sandy-haired, anxious little father—assistant to a grocer—and herself, sitting at the

little round table covered with a red checked cloth, with the bland light of the lamp on their faces—she saw it painfully, bitterly well; and her father asking who was that young chap who had walked home from the chapel with her, and her mother pretending to frown. They were so proud and pleased with her prettiness and briskness, so hopeful for her!

For just a moment she passionately resented her rôle of parent, forever giving and giving. She wanted to have one person on earth concerned with *her* fatigue, *her* sorrow. She sat quite still before her little supper, lost in her thought. Then some slight movement of her child's brought her back to life, and she looked up with her little sigh.

Poor, poor Angelica! Poor lovely, unhappy thing, working in a factory! Wouldn't that have shocked her grandparents? Wouldn't they have been shocked at Angelica, anyway—her swagger, her language, her point of view! Her heart melted with pity for her child.

"I don't blame you, Angelica," she said. "I know how hard it is to get on with that sort; but, deary, what better can you do? One job's as bad as another. The thing is to do your best and trust in Providence. I'll do the best I can to make things happy for you here at home. We'll have our little treats. We've always been happy together, haven't we? It's our lot in life to have to work hard and get very little. We've got to put up with it, and just be as happy as we can."

"No, I'm not like that. I'm—no, I *won't!*"

She wasn't able to express her rebellion, her vehement longings, but her mother understood her very well.

"I was just like you," she said mournfully; "restless—always after something new—anything for a change. I wanted—the Lord knows *what* I wanted!"

She poured out another cup of tea.

"Eat a bit more," she said. "You're tired and worked up like. Yes!" she added. "I was like you, Angelica; and you can see what it did for me. I was a nice-looking girl

in those days. There was more than one young fellow who wanted to marry me; but I wouldn't have any of them. I thought they weren't good enough. I was a great one for reading books, and my head was full of nonsense.

"Then I met your father. He was a fine-looking man, Angelica. You can't remember him when he was well. He was a big, handsome man, a barber. My folks were terrible set against it, and I don't wonder. There he was, an Italian, and twenty years older than me, and nothing in the world but a barber, and a kind of a Socialist. He was always talking about killing the rich people. I think he'd have been willing enough to do something like that with his own hands, he used to get so worked up. He was a queer man, Angelica. And yet, for all his talk about killing, and the awful things he'd say against religion and churches, why, he wasn't a bad man. He was generous. He'd share his last penny with a friend. He often did; we'd have to go without ourselves if one of his precious 'comrades' was in a tight corner. He was a smart man, too. He spent all his spare time in the free library, reading; but that never gets you anywhere, Angelica. He had no knack for earning money, and he never could save. What's more, he wasn't fond of work. He'd rather read or talk. He could talk all night, I do believe.

"It nearly broke my mother's heart when I went off with Angelo. My father, he said he'd never speak to me again, nor have my name spoken in the house, on account of my marrying an atheist, you see. But I didn't seem to care. There was something about him——"

She was silent for a time, recalling her startling foreign lover, with his caressing voice, his mandolin-playing, his anti-clerical passions, and the brisk, pretty young girl who had been herself.

"I was terrible headstrong. I wouldn't listen to any one. I *would* have him, and I did. Well, I was punished for my folly and wickedness, I can tell you. It's always

the way when you won't listen to your own dear parents and those that are wiser than yourself. We never got on. From the very day we were married—you don't know what it's like, Angelica. We were always owing money. He wouldn't hand what he made over to me, for me to manage. I never knew where we stood. All of a sudden he'd say, 'No more money!' and there we'd be, without a penny. We had to live in such a mean, poor way that I lost my health. One time we were turned out of our rooms, out into the street, bag and baggage, with all the neighbors looking on.

"When you were born, I'd hardly so much as a blanket to wrap you in. I never had a bow of ribbon or a thing to dress you up pretty, like the other little babies. And when your father took sick, there wasn't even a fresh sheet for him. 'Take him off to the hospital,' says the doctor. 'He can't be looked after in a place like this. He'll die.' 'Very good, I die!' says he. 'But I die home!' Poor man! There he lay, so hot and wretched, and you in a clothes-basket beside him fretting all day and all night, so he couldn't get any rest and peace. We'd only the one room.

"Well, when he was taken sick, of course there was no money at all coming in. His precious 'comrades' never came near him, least of all the ones that owed him money; so I began going out by the day, and I left an old Italian woman to take care of you and him. Every morning, when I'd go out, I'd feel sure and certain neither of you'd be alive and safe when I got back. Both of you sick, and no good food or proper care! And I'd think of her setting the place on fire, or leaving the gas turned on. Then I'd come home, tired as a dog, and not a soul to speak to: you a tiny little baby crying in your basket, and your poor father moaning in his bed; everything dirty and upset. You can't think what it was like.

"I'm not blaming your poor father, Angelica. I'm only telling you this to show you how those high-flown notions—

where they'll lead you. In this world, you've got to be sensible, and not follow your own notions."

Not follow romance was what she meant, and what Angelica understood; for wasn't that what she had done? And had won it, to see it perish in a long agony, as romance must always perish, whether won or lost. She wanted so passionately to make it all clear to her child, to tell her how she had seen the hard, the dull, the greedy, attain their heart's desire; but the romantic, the generous, never. She wanted to tell her how hideous is the death of illusion, how merciless is the world. How her splendid hero, black-eyed Angelo with the flashing smile, had fallen from splendour—had, so to speak, dwindled into a miserable invalid, duped by his friends, and deprived of all courage by the knowledge of their treachery. How she had seen her youth go by unnoticed, unappreciated, in that struggle for bread; of the loneliness and the frightful indignities of poverty.

"It was a mistake," she said. "The whole thing was a big mistake!"

"I don't know," said Angelica. "Maybe you wouldn't have been any happier with a different man."

"I'd certainly have been happier with enough to eat. If I'd listened to my parents, I'd taken a sober, hard-working——"

"Bah!" cried Angelica, with the sudden fierceness that always startled her mother. "You married the man you wanted, didn't you? He didn't make any money, so you were poor. Well, what of it? You've—anyway you've got a memory of him, to look back at, haven't you?"

And her mother hadn't the heart to tell her the truth—that even in memory the ardent, enchanting lover was supplanted by the querulous and unshaven sufferer who lay dying for months and months of some disease which they didn't understand, and which the busy doctor didn't trouble to explain to them.

"I hope you'll be sensible, Angelica," she said.

She saw well enough that her story had made no sort of impression upon her child. Angelica was still so young that what happened to other people and what happened to her had no connection in her mind. She fancied that all her experiences, as well as all her ideas, were unique. Her mother could read in her face that she was thinking now, not of her mother's past, but of her own future.

"I hope you'll be sensible," she said again. "Try to learn to be satisfied with your lot in life. That's how all my troubles began—being discontented. Try to be satisfied."

"No, I shan't," said her rebellious child. "Listen, mother!"

"Well?"

"I was thinking. I don't know—but I thought—maybe there's something in this."

She handed her mother a scrap torn from a newspaper.

CHEERFUL young lady wanted as companion for invalid; experience unnecessary. Apply Thursday morning to Mrs. Russell, Buena Vista, Baycliff, Westchester.

"But, deary, don't you see?" cried her mother, startled. "You don't mean that *you'd* try for that?"

"Why not, mother?" demanded Angelica, flushing.

"But, deary, don't you see? It's—they'll—they wouldn't want a girl like you."

"*Why not?*" she asked again, still more fiercely.

But her mother wouldn't say it. Anyway, she knew that Angelica understood her meaning perfectly.

"A waste of carfare," she said. "All that money—there's no sense at all in your going. There'll be dozens after the place—girls that—that'll suit better."

Her object was to spare her child the humiliation she foresaw for her—a factory girl, a bold-eyed, ignorant young thing in the cheapest sort of clothes, offering herself to a lady as a companion! Herself brought up in a quite differ-

ent way, accustomed to recognizing, without snobbery and without resentment, that there were in the world groups of people better and groups worse than her own sort, she could not comprehend Angelica's attitude. Angelica envied without admiring. In fact, she despised "rich people" almost as much as her father had, but her ambition in life was to be one of them.

"I'll risk the carfare," she said. "I'm going to try, anyway. You know, mommer, maybe they're sick of those silly little dolls—'ladies'—especially if it's an invalid. They said 'cheerful,' you know."

"All ladies aren't silly dolls," said Mrs. Kennedy, displeased. "And I don't know as you're so cheerful, Angelica."

"I could be, if I wanted. Anyway, I'm going to try. I'll just take the fare. I'll give you all the rest, mommer."

She took out a shabby little purse, counted her money, put some back, and laid the rest on the tub tops. Such a pitiful sum! It hurt her mother.

"It's all yours," she said. "You've worked for it. Do as you please. If you really want to go—— I'm sure I hope you'll get the place."

After a moment she added:

"I hope you know, Angie, that I want you to have the best—the very best there is. I think you deserve it. Only, deary, I don't want you to be disappointed; and I don't see how you can help being. I want you to know, deary, that I'm——"

She couldn't think of a word. She stood anxiously frowning, looking at the ground for a minute.

"I'm always—on your side," she ended.

Angelica sprang up from the table and seized her mother in a fierce embrace.

"*Mamma mia!*" she whispered, as her father had taught her, long ago.

Her mother was curiously thrilled and touched. She looked up with brimming eyes at the dark and foreign face bending above her.

“What’s that he used to say—*feeliar*, or something?” she murmured, embarrassed. “You’re a good girl, Angelica. I hope you’ll be lucky!”

CHAPTER TWO

I

In spite of an air of complete self-assurance, Angelica was very nervous the next morning. She lingered over her breakfast with a sort of languor well-known to her mother, for wasn't that, hadn't that always been, her air of desperation and defiance? She saw that Angelica had no idea of changing her mind, and also that, upon thinking it over, she had realized to some extent how daring was her project, and was frightened.

Mrs. Kennedy had to put in a day washing for one of the tenants, and was in a hurry. She stooped over the table to print on a piece of wrapping-paper the usual note to be pinned on her door:

JANITRESS WILL BE FOUND IN APT. 12

Then, straightening up, she looked anxiously at her child.

"Well, deary! If you've made up your mind—good luck to you!"

Angelica smiled faintly. When the door had closed after her mother, she rose herself and went into the black little bedroom, where a small jet of gas showed her a shadowy face in a broken mirror. She put on her hat, very carefully, and her jacket, but lingered still; until ringing across the cement floor of the cellar came a heavy and familiar step—Oscar, the furnace man, going out for his morning beer. That meant nine o'clock; she *had* to go!

Once in the street, her self-confidence returned. She was always best in a crowd, in any position where she had to

fight her way. The glances that followed her warmed her heart, assured her of her alluring and devilish charm. She liked it all—liked to turn with terrible scorn upon any one who ventured to jostle her, like to disconcert with a long, insolent stare any man who might presume to look too long at her.

She was a child of the streets; she loved them as an Arab loves the desert, or a sailor the sea. She had been brought up in the streets. There, in rough games, she had learned to hold her own; there, running the gauntlet of a mob of jeering boys, she had learned to endure valiantly, without longing for sympathy. Her mother had always tried her best to keep the child off the streets, but could not. On her way home from school, whenever she was sent on an errand, Angelica would seize the chance to linger in that violent and exciting life. And then, later, when she was a young girl, came those curious sidewalk flirtations, so hostile in mood, so brutally chaste. She wouldn't stand any nonsense!

After all, her life within the house with her mother was nothing, only interludes of rest in her vehement existence. It was out there, in the streets, that she had become Angelica.

She had never yet traveled by railway, though she had often enough gone to the Grand Central Terminal with girl friends and pretended, rather pitifully, to be going on a journey. They would stand near the gateway of a train, and say good-by, and perhaps walk forward a few steps with the crowd. She was tremendously proud really to be going off now.

In the tunnel she took the opportunity to study her reflection in the darkened window, and it pleased and encouraged her—the great, shadowy eyes, the pallor of her face, the big hat framing it. It seemed to her that she looked romantic, and not at all what she was. She began to imagine that she might hoodwink this Mrs. Russell, that she might pass muster even among ladies.

II

She never forgot her first sight of that house, and never afterward did it really look otherwise to her. In rain, in snow, in summer or winter, it was always to her as she had first seen it on that breezy spring morning.

It was a big stone house on a wide, sunny hill, and it had somehow a festive air, with its striped awnings, the white curtains fluttering at open windows, and a flag flying on a pole on the summit of the hill. It put her in mind of a picture she had seen in an old school copy of "Ivanhoe," of a medieval castle on the day of a tournament.

She was profoundly impressed. The complacency she had felt on the train melted away, and she began to realize how preposterous her idea was. She entered the iron gate and began walking up the long gravel path which led up the hill to the house, a solitary figure, with bare, sunny lawns on either side of her, behind her the highroad where motor-cars were spinning past, before her the august, the unknown house. Altogether an alien world where she felt mean and pitiful in her cheap clothes, her worn, shapeless boots.

"I *look* like a factory girl," she reflected bitterly. "Any one would know. Perhaps they won't even let me in."

The maid who opened the door was certainly not encouraging. She looked Angelica up and down.

"I don't know whether Mrs. Russell 'll see any more of you," she said. "Such a crowd all morning! Come in, though."

Angelica followed her into a large hall with a polished floor, where upon chairs ranged along the wall sat a row of women, beginning in darkness at the farther end of the hall, and ending in sunshine near the door, where Angelica took her seat.

She sat for some minutes in a frozen quiet, until her awe of the great house and the severe servant and the unknown

women ebbed away, and her natural curiosity came flowing back. Then she turned her head a little and saw them all, the whole row, staring at her. Her spine stiffened instinctively, and she began a deliberate survey of her rivals.

The first two she couldn't see, because they sat under the stairs in utter darkness. Then came a portly old lady with an immense alligator-skin bag; then a very composed, handsome woman in black. She got no further, for the servant came hurrying back across the slippery floor, to let in still another applicant.

Angelica now joined with the others in staring at this new one—a blonde, superior young person, tightly corseted. She sat down next to Angelica, and once more the line composed itself to waiting. A quarter of an hour went by; then the old lady with the alligator bag began whispering to her neighbor in the dark, and that started a sort of general conversation in whispers. The information was passed along the line that “she”—the first one, under the stairs—had been there two hours.

“I came here before about a month ago,” whispered the one before Angelica. “She advertised, but she changed her mind and sent us all away.”

Angelica was surprised at the timidity of this person who was so obviously a lady, if a rather faded one. It gave her courage. Being a lady wasn't the whole thing, then, after all. She was on the point of answering, when once more the parlour maid hurried past, to admit an extraordinary object.

She was a tall, bony woman of perhaps fifty, dressed in a checked coat and riding-breeches, with a derby hat jammed down over her face and a confusion of red hair streaming from under it. As she crossed the hall, the last pin seemed to give way, and it all fell down about her shoulders. She made a helpless sort of gesture to put it right, found she couldn't, and went on, with a long stride. Her face was overshadowed by her hat, but there were visible a sharp

nose and a pointed chin. Her voice was unexpectedly soft and agreeable.

"Good morning!" she said. "Who's first?"

The young blonde jumped up.

"I, please!" she said.

They were all struck dumb for a minute; then Angelica said boldly:

"You're not!"

The lady in breeches turned her head briskly.

"Never mind!" she said pleasantly. "I'll see you first anyway. You'll each have your turn; don't worry!"

The young woman followed her into a room across the hall, and the door was closed.

"Well, I never!" cried a voice from the darkness.

It was the woman who had waited two hours. An indignant and subdued chorus began, which ended only when the blond young lady reappeared, smiling falsely, and walked past them all to the front door. She had failure written upon her face; and she knew it, and was very anxious to be gone. But the front door would not open; she was obliged to stand there, fumbling with the lock, raked by the eyes of those whom she had defrauded.

"She didn't stay long!" observed the old lady. "Well, I didn't think she'd suit."

"Of course not!" said another.

"Such tricks never bring any good luck," said the old lady. "After all, there is such a thing as justice in this world, and no——"

The red-haired lady returned and opened the front door.

"Now then!" she said, beckoning to Angelica.

Angelica shook her head.

"No—I'm the last," she replied.

"It doesn't matter about the order. Please come in."

So Angelica followed her into a dark little paneled room, where an orange-shaded lamp glowed from the top of a piano, showing carved chairs, a soft, dull rug, a harp, and a

suit of armour that glistened from a corner. It seemed an enchanted room, like a scene from a play, or a dream. Angelica really didn't worry now about getting the position; it was worth while having come, just to have got inside of this house and this room.

The extraordinary lady sat down upon a divan and crossed her long legs. She had a pencil in her hand, and a little notebook, and she was most businesslike.

"Your name?" she inquired.

"Angelica Kennedy."

It wasn't really Angelica's name; Kennedy was her mother's name, but they had both agreed that Donallotti was an impossible and unseemly patronymic, and might cause them to be taken for *foreigners*.

"Your age?"

"Nineteen."

Angelica felt terribly at a disadvantage, standing there to be questioned. She could hear her own voice, rather hoarse, and her vulgar accent. She was conscious of being ungloved, of being awkward and despised. She felt herself lost, she was in despair, she longed to run away and be done with this misery; but the lady went on pleasantly.

"Your address?"

Her heart sank still lower as she saw written down the obscure and sordid street.

"Could you give me any social references?"

That finished her.

"No!" she said curtly.

"Oh! Can't you?" said the nice voice, disappointed. "What about experience, then? What have you done?"

"You said experience was unnecessary."

"Yes, I know; but can't you give me some sort of idea, you know—something about yourself?"

Angelica was obstinately silent.

"What made you come? What did you think your qualifications were?" the other asked, less pleasantly.

"I could be useful," said Angelica sullenly. "I can sew—trim hats—I worked with a milliner once. Whatever else you wanted I could learn, and I wouldn't expect much pay while I was learning."

The lady interrupted her.

"How much would you expect?" she asked, with sudden interest.

"I don't care. Just enough to help—mother. And I'm real quick to learn. I could——"

"There isn't anything to learn, my dear," said the red-haired one. With an astounding change of manner, she suddenly became confidential and garrulous. "You see, it's for my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Geraldine. She must have some one with her. The doctor says she's not to be left alone. She's been through a dreadful experience. She lost her sweet little baby six weeks ago. Isn't that dreadful?"

Angelica agreed briefly that it was.

"Well, I want some one just to be about with her, you know. No work; it's really an ideal life. I said to my husband I'd absolutely love to do it myself, if I had the time. She's the dearest soul—a little depressed now, naturally. How much would you expect?"

"What do you want to give?"

"You see, it has to come out of my own pocket. I'm doing it for her, to make her happy. I'll pay, but she'll have the benefit; and of course I'm not able to—I'll give you twenty dollars."

"A week?"

"A month."

Angelica was quiet for a moment. It was perfectly apparent to her that cheapness was her only asset; that if she didn't come cheap and very cheap, she wouldn't be considered. She reflected, and grew more and more convinced that here was a stepping-stone.

"All right," she said. "That's not much pay, but I'll take it."

"And what about references?" asked Mrs. Russell.

This was an attempt to regain a lost advantage. If she was getting Angelica cheap, she must make her feel and see that she was cheap.

"I haven't any."

"Oh, but you must have *SOME!*" said Mrs. Russell.

She was determined that Angelica should give her references, even if they were obviously false ones. She knew she would be questioned in regard to this, and she preferred to say that she had been deceived. That would absolve her from blame. It would even add to her merit, showing her to be trusting and kindly.

"The rector of your church, perhaps?" she suggested.

"Haven't any church."

"Didn't you say that you'd worked for a milliner?" Wouldn't she——"

"Not on your life! My Lord! I don't know what she *wouldn't* say about me! She hated the sight of me. Jealous! No, there's no one; but if you want to know more about me, you could go and see my mother."

"I might do that," said Mrs. Russell slowly. It was a good idea; she would certainly be praised for going to all this trouble in investigating the character of Polly's companion. "Yes, I will. I'll go down to the city and fetch you to-morrow morning. And be ready for me early, won't you?—for I have so very little time." She went to the door, followed by Angelica; then out into the hall, where the patient row still sat, waiting for the turns she had promised them.

"I'm sorry," she told them, with an affable smile, "but the place is taken. Good morning!"

They all stared at her incredulously for a moment. Then, as she held open the front door, they got up, surged out together, and went down the hill in a straggling parade, all so shabby in the sunlight. The one who had been waiting so very long, in the dark under the stairs—a wan little thing in a befeathered hat—turned upon Angelica a dreadful look.

CHAPTER THREE

I

Angelica was ready by nine o'clock the next morning, with a bag in which was packed every decent thing she owned. The people in the flat above had been astounded by the sound of Mrs. Kennedy's sewing-machine at two o'clock in the morning, for she and her child had sat up nearly all night, making ready. It was a melancholy, a heart-breaking work for the poor mother. *She* wasn't going away. She had no adventure to excite her, no ambition, no hope, nothing but the bitter certainty of loneliness and poverty. She tried to be—not cheerful, for that she never was, but calm and reasonable, while all the time she had before her the spectre of the evening when she would come home to empty rooms, to eat her supper alone. A groan escaped her, which she tried to turn into a sigh.

"It's the very, very worst that can happen to any one in this wide world," she thought; "to be left all alone, and getting old!"

She hadn't been able to keep her eyes from Angelica, sitting bent over a blouse she was finishing, with her hair, just washed, hanging down her back, wet, straight, and heavy, drying about her face in a sort of mist of feathery tendrils.

Angelica was glad, she was delighted to go. She certainly loved her mother, but a separation of a week, a month, a year, didn't trouble her, didn't cause her a pang. She knew in theory that life is terribly uncertain, but she didn't really believe it. She felt sure that no matter where she went, or how long she stayed, her mother would be there at home, absolutely unchanged.

She was the child who has never been burnt, sitting before the glowing fire. Having as yet never lost anything, she didn't value anything. In that enticing future toward which she looked, she expected to live once more with her mother. In the meantime it didn't matter.

"Well!" said Mrs. Kennedy. "I'll have no one to go to the movies with now."

"You wait!" said Angelica. "One of these days I'll take you to a *real* show, mommer!"

Already she saw herself the benefactor. She had forgotten, or perhaps didn't even know, how limitlessly she had received.

They went to bed in the early morning, and Angelica slept, while her weary mother lay awake at her side in the narrow bed they shared. The room was too dark for her to see anything, but she could hear the breathing of her dear child, and with a furtive hand feel that soft, slippery hair, still fresh and redolent of white soap.

"I've got to expect it!" she told herself over and over. "I've got to expect it! They all go, for one reason or another. We've got to make up our minds to lose everything in this world."

She got up again at six, and set to work cleaning her little flat from end to end, so that it should be ready for Mrs. Russell's inspection. Angelica insisted upon helping her.

"Oh, mommer, for Gawd's sake! I won't get tired, and I won't get dirty. She won't come before ten, anyway—prob'ly later. I bet she has her breakfast in bed!"

"She must be a queer one," said Mrs. Kennedy, "from what you tell me."

"A freak! I wish you could have seen her—with pants on and her hair coming down her back. And there's something mean about her, too. I don't like her—telling them all they'd get their turns, and then putting them out, that way. And look at what she's paying me!"

“Angie, if you’re going to work for her,” said Mrs. Kennedy gravely, “you’d better hold your tongue about her. If you can take her money——”

“I only wish I had a chance to take a little more of it! I don’t see how you’ll get along, mommer.”

“Oh, I’ll manage,” said her mother.

She might have mentioned that she had supported her child for many, many years, and that even after Angelica had become a wage-earner she had taken very little of the girl’s money—only what had to be used to conform to Angie’s ever more and more exacting standards.

II

At ten o’clock Mrs. Russell hadn’t come yet, and Mrs. Kennedy couldn’t wait any longer. She was obliged to go out and scrub the halls. She had her best black silk blouse on, too, and she was dreadfully nervous about splashing. Every half-hour or so she ran down-stairs to her child, to see if the lady hadn’t come yet, and found Angelica scornfully waiting, reading a magazine.

At one o’clock they sat down in the kitchen to a hurried meal of tea and bread, ready to hide all traces of it at the first sound of the door-bell.

“I promised Mrs. Schell I’d do her kitchen floor this afternoon,” said Mrs. Kennedy, with an anxious frown. “What do you want me to do about it, Angie?”

“Go ahead! If she comes, I’ll run up and get you.”

She spent a miserable afternoon. She scrubbed with conscientious vigour, but with an absent mind. She thought the same thoughts over and over—first, how disappointed Angie would be if the lady never came; then that perhaps, after all, she wasn’t going to lose her.

“Maybe we’ll have supper together again this very night!” she would think hopefully.

Upon the heels of her hope came the certainty that if Angelica didn't go away now, she would later. It was sure to come; no chance whatever that such a girl would stop there, underground, with her.

When she came down again for the last time, at six o'clock, Angelica was in the little parlour, now black as the pit, and she was so very still that her mother felt disturbed. She was afraid that the poor, proud thing was grieving, and she went in to her, noiseless in her thin old shoes; but when she had lighted the lamp, she saw that Angelica was sleeping, stretched out limp and childish in the big rocking-chair.

Mrs. Kennedy hurried away breathlessly to the grocer's, to buy a little treat; for weren't they going to have supper together again after all?

III

It was eight o'clock when Mrs. Russell came. Finding the door unlocked, she walked in without permission, as one is surely privileged to do in so mean a home. They were in the kitchen, with the water running in the sink, and they didn't hear her come down the hall, didn't know that she was standing in the door, watching them.

"Well, are you ready?" she demanded.

They both turned and regarded her with just the same look—a fine indignation, a stern surprise—Mrs. Kennedy with both hands plunged in the dish-pan, Angelica holding a dish which she was wiping. They resented the intrusion, and they showed it.

"Yes, I'm ready," said Angelica slowly.

She stood regarding Mrs. Russell with a steady, level gaze, not devoid of insolence, for she knew no other way to meet the careless condescension of that lady.

Although she was young and lovely, and in spite of Mrs.

Russell's slovenliness and egotism, Angelica felt her own inferiority. She hadn't what Mrs. Russell had—Mrs. Russell standing there in a dreadful green tweed suit, with a mannish sort of felt hat on her wild red hair, with her great flat feet and her mechanical smile. That manner, and above all, that voice, clear, cool, soft! Quite unconsciously, Angelica had a profound Latin admiration for *sangfroid*. She couldn't be coolly self-possessed; couldn't be anything more or less than rude.

"Get your things on, then, won't you please?" said Mrs. Russell.

Angelica was on the point of saying that she would first finish the task in hand, but her mother pushed her gently away.

"Go along!" she said.

There was but one course open to a proud soul. It was essential to keep Mrs. Russell waiting as long as possible, and that Angelica did. She could hear voices from the parlour—her mother's, subdued and monotonous, and Mrs. Russell's, light, gay, and sweet. While she dawdled before the mirror there came a new voice, shouting reproachfully through the open front door:

"Now then, Mrs. Russell! It's late!"

Angelica looked out and saw in their little hall a chauffeur in livery. Mrs. Russell was also looking out.

"Very well, Courtland," she said soothingly. "Come in and get the young lady's luggage. Where is it, please?"

"Here!" said Angelica, pointing to a little pasteboard suitcase, painted to look like leather.

The chauffeur regarded it in silence for a minute; then he picked it up disdainfully, swung it in the air to emphasize its lightness, and went out.

"Don't be all night!" he called back.

His effrontery was amazing to Mrs. Kennedy. She couldn't help but feel suspicious of a lady whose servants spoke to her so disrespectfully.

Mrs. Russell, instead of being angry, seemed alarmed.

"Make haste, please!" she said. "It's late."

She beckoned to Angelica, who followed at her heels. They went out, and the front door closed after them.

Mrs. Kennedy sank into the rocking-chair and put her head down on her folded arms, on the table. She had an odd and horrible sensation, such as a fast-walking man might feel at coming suddenly up against a high wall. She was at the end—the end of something. She was like a tired, mercilessly driven horse whose rider has jumped off. Those twenty years of drudgery, the struggle to "keep up a home," the debts so painfully met, the persecutions and indignities endured, all for that girl who had gone off with only a smile over her shoulder! She groaned—a sound which startled even herself. It was all so wasted, so utterly done with now!

Then like a whirlwind came Angelica back again, seized the little woman in her arms, and strained her against her thin body.

"Mommer!" she cried with a sob. "Dear, dear darling old mommer! I had to come—just to say good-by alone. Don't be sad, deary mommer, please! It's only for a little while, you know!"

"No!" said her mother's heart. "You will never come back. I have lost you!"

CHAPTER FOUR

I

"It can't be the same night!" said Angelica to herself. "It can't be only an hour ago that I was in the kitchen at home!"

For here she was now, in a soft little nest of a room, furnished in mahogany and dull blue, with every sort of convenience and luxury, with a gleaming white bathroom of its own, with long mirrors, shaded lamps, easy chairs. It amazed her. She had locked the door and got undressed, but she couldn't persuade herself to go to bed. Barefooted, in a sturdy cotton nightdress her mother had made, she wandered about, examining everything like a happy child.

Then, not for the first time, she sat down before the dressing-table and studied her own reflection in the triple mirror—the profile with the long, delicate nose, the narrow cheek, the soft fullness of the chin. Then she looked straight before her, at her dark and solemn face, her long black hair, parted in the middle, making her more than ever like a Madonna, sorrowful, spiritual.

She was vaguely aware of the rare and exotic quality of her charm, and she was dissatisfied with herself because her thoughts were so incongruous. She couldn't help wondering how much the lace bedspread cost, and where it had been bought. She had seen furnishings like these in the shops, and she began to compute how much the whole thing must have cost.

"For Gawd's sake!" she cried impatiently. "Why can't I just enjoy it, and not be so——"

She had no word for her meaning. She got up, and

from behind the curtains looked out upon the clear and chilly May night, down below, across the road, over a woodland of delicate young trees, scarcely stirring in a faint wind. That august loveliness disturbed her. She turned away, back to the shelter of the dainty room, puzzled and angry because she couldn't enjoy it with simplicity; because there was something, in the night outside—or was it within herself?—that distressed and hurt her.

Undine waiting for a soul!

II

There was a knock at the door, and she flew across the room, alarmed. Who knew what customs these rich people had? A little clock told her that it was just ten; she was sure they didn't go to bed then. She knew, indeed, from the Sunday papers, that they turned night into day. Perhaps they had a meal now, and she was expected to be ready for it.

"What is it?" she asked, through the closed door.

"Mrs. Russell wants you at once in her room," said a sharp voice.

So she put on her shrunken, faded little kimono and went out into the hall. A light burned there, showing a double row of closed doors. In what possible way was she to know Mrs. Russell's? She was daunted; she didn't even know who composed the household; couldn't imagine who might be behind those closed doors.

There wasn't a sound in the house. She advanced a little, and stopped again, frowning at her own distress, her own fast-beating heart.

"I'm only doing what I'm paid to do!" she reassured herself. "If I can't find her, I'm a fool. I will! I'll knock at every single door!"

She began with a firm rap on the door next her own.

There was no response, so she tried the next, and at once that agreeable voice called out:

“Come in!”

Mrs. Russell lay in bed with her eyes closed, in a lace cap and negligée. Her little rose-shaded lamp gave only a dim light, by which she looked oddly young and pretty; even her tousled hair was charming. The rest of the big room was shadowy, with here and there a glint from glass or silver.

There was absolute silence; Mrs. Russell didn't stir. Angelica felt herself at a great disadvantage in her kimono, standing at the bedside, waiting for orders. It nettled her.

“Well!” she demanded, with a boldness that surprised even herself.

But Mrs. Russell didn't notice it, or at least didn't appear to notice it. She opened her eyes and smiled affably.

“I'm horribly selfish, aren't I? But I'm such a miserable sleeper, and I felt—won't you read to me a bit?”

“All right!” said Angelica; but though she spoke so carelessly, she felt suddenly quite sick. “What shall I read?”

“Here's my book. I suppose you don't read French, do you?”

Angelica reddened.

“Yes, of course!” she answered. “Nothing but French spoken in the factory, you know!”

“We'll stick to English, then,” said Mrs. Russell, with just the same smile. “And hand me my cigarette-case, won't you?”

Angelica did so, and nervously opened the book at a marked page; but Mrs. Russell stopped her.

“Just a minute please! I want to ask you something. I'll have to explain things a little. I told you, didn't I, that I really engaged you for my daughter-in-law? She's in a terrible state, poor soul! She lost her little boy. He died of pneumonia six weeks ago. Do you know, I've always thought that that poor little creature caught the disease from

a friend of Polly's, whose husband was just getting over it when she came here. My husband insists that it's awfully contagious, or infectious, or whichever it is. And this woman, my dear, was so heartless about that poor man! She said, when I asked after him, 'Oh, nothing will *ever* kill him!' Did you ever? But as far as that goes, she's never made the slightest pretense of caring for him. But I think—don't you?—that you can be decent without being hypocritical. She simply tells every one that she married him for his money, and that now she's got it, she's going to spend it. Of course, I've known her for years, but her husband's more or less of a stranger—a Canadian, I think; and really very nice—too nice, I tell her. I don't make any pretense about it. I simply tell her she's a heartless little beast, and extravagant. It's incredible!"

Angelica was bewildered by this volubility. She saw no point in it, and yet she couldn't believe that any words spoken in so beautiful a voice, and with so just and well-bred an accent, were mere nonsense. She sat staring at the red-haired lady until she came back to her subject.

"But about Polly. She's the dearest creature in all the world, but she's rather peculiar in some ways. She's—well, exacting. She can't see—she wants every instant of my time. Of course I'm willing—I'm glad to be with her; but after all, one has one's own life, and there's my husband. But if ever I suggest a companion! My dear! We have the most miserable time. She never says a word, but she lets you see. . . .

"But I simply cannot stop in that room all day long. I'm frightfully dependent upon exercise. If I don't get plenty of it, I go all to pieces. I can't sit still there hour after hour. I'm terribly sorry about her child, and all that, but really, what is the good in talking and talking about it? It only upsets her. And yet, if you try to talk of anything else, you can see she considers you cruel and unfeeling. She simply broods over the thing. She's so morbidly sensitive

that it's painful to be with her. And I'm not particularly good with sick people myself. I'm too nervous. My dear, you'll remember all this, won't you, and be tactful with the poor soul?"

"When will I see her?"

"That's the point. You see, it would never do to bring you in as a companion. She says she couldn't stand a hired companion, when she's in such a state. She doesn't seem to understand that I've got to have some sort of relief. That's why I'm paying you out of my own pocket; but it won't do to let her know. That's why I've given you that little guest-room. I want to tell her you're the daughter of an old friend, and that you've come to visit me—until she gets used to you. Do you see?"

"Yes," said Angelica. "But do you think she'll believe it?"

"Don't worry, my dear. I understand Polly. All you've got to do is to sit with her and listen to her if she wants to talk. She won't ask you any questions; she's too indifferent. That's really the trouble with the poor girl—she's so self-centered. She lies there, brooding. Of course, it's hard for her; but after all, we all have our troubles to bear. Now, to-morrow morning I'll take you in there and introduce you to her, and you must——"

She stopped abruptly and yawned. It was a disconcerting habit she had, as if her incredibly frivolous mind wore itself down by its own erratic movements.

"Now read, won't you?" she asked.

Angelica began, took up the book, and plunged into it, concentrating her mind fiercely on the words alone. She had no idea what the book was about; what she read conveyed no impression to her mind. Her sole thought was not to expose herself, not to make mistakes, and of course she did. There came words upon words which she couldn't pronounce.

"What?" Mrs. Russell would ask with an amused frown,

and Angelica would have to stop and spell the word and be corrected.

For days they stayed in her head to torment her, those words, those sounds which she repeated after Mrs. Russell. They danced before her eyes, rang in her ears at night.

It was a horrible hour. Angelica couldn't make any sort of counter-attack, couldn't assert herself, could only go on, and make outrageous blunders, and humbly repeat the corrections.

Came a long French phrase, not one word of which she could manage. She stopped short.

"Go on!" said Mrs. Russell.

Angelica flew at the thing, desperately and recklessly. Mrs. Russell couldn't stop laughing. She lay back on her pillows and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Oh, my dear! That's really—— You mustn't mind my laughing, will you?"

"I don't," said Angelica.

But she did—she hated and dreaded that laughter with all her heart. If she had planned it carefully, Mrs. Russell couldn't have devised a better method for subduing her.

Yet all her recollections of this nightmare of shame and distress were permeated by the mystic atmosphere that so enthralled her—the rose-shaded light, the nonchalant, red-haired lady in bed, the sweet smoke of the cigarettes; all the softness, the seclusion, the luxury, all the amazing fascination of a dream come true—except, of course, that she should have been in Mrs. Russell's place.

III

"All right! Never mind! Don't bother any more!" murmured Mrs. Russell at last. "It's a stupid story, anyway; and I suppose you're getting sleepy. If you'll go downstairs and fetch me another book, I'll read myself to sleep."

There's a package of new books Eddie brought home. Pick out something that looks bright and jolly, will you? They're on the table in the library."

"I'll have to get dressed first."

"No, you won't. Put on my slippers and run down as you are. There's not a soul in the house but Polly and you and me and the servants, and they're all women. It's just at the foot of the stairs."

So Angelica, shamefaced in her kimono and with her hanging hair, went softly down the stairs. The halls were brightly lighted, but there was no one about, and not a sound. She went into the library, which she remembered having passed. It was fascinating to her at this hour—silent and warm, with little glowing lamps in the corners and rows and rows of orderly books.

On the long table in the center of the room lay the package she had been told of. The paper was opened, and showed five or six fresh, brightly bound books. Angelica inspected them with profound attention, for with all her heart she desired to make an intelligent choice. At last she picked out three, and was about to go upstairs with them, when a voice addressed her—a man's voice.

"Are they for Mrs. Russell?" it said.

She started violently, dismayed at being seen by masculine eyes in such a costume. He was standing in the doorway; evidently he had just come in, for he carried his hat and stick. He wore a dinner-jacket, and it was the first time Angelica had ever been spoken to by a man in a dinner-jacket.

"Yes," she answered.

"All those books are good," he said. "I know she'll like them all. I picked them out for her."

She gave him a quick and stealthy look, and her heart beat faster. He might, she thought, very well be the hero for whom she was waiting. He was a tall, blond fellow with a little fair mustache, very boyish-looking, very serious,

not exactly handsome, but unquestionably possessed of a certain distinction. She looked at him again, but this time she met his eyes squarely, his shrewd gray eyes, and she saw quite plainly that he was displeased, that he didn't like to see girls in kimonos in that library.

"Who are you?" he asked Angelica. "A new maid?"

"No!" she replied indignantly. "Not a maid. I'm her—I don't know what her name is—her companion."

He raised his eyebrows.

"I'll take up the books," he said. "I want to speak to Mrs. Russell. You needn't trouble. Good night!"

He waved her out of the room ahead of him. She hurried, anxious to get out of his sight, and went into her own room. Looking back, she saw that he had left the door of Mrs. Russell's room open, and she approached, to listen, for she felt quite sure that the conversation would relate to herself.

The young man had flung the books on the table, and was talking angrily.

"Then what did you do it for? You've no business to bring a girl like that into the house!"

"She's respectable," said Mrs. Russell.

"You don't know. She doesn't look it. Anyway, even if she is, she's no more fit to be a companion than—I don't know what. It's an insult to Polly!"

"No, it isn't. She's a nice, cheerful girl, and she can be very useful. She sews——"

"If you want her for a maid, call her a maid, and put her in a maid's room. Why did you put her there, at the end of the hall? One of the best rooms!"

"To be near me."

"Near you? You said she was for Polly."

"That's no reason why she shouldn't help me now and then when I——"

"Now, look here!" interrupted the young man. "This is final. Either she goes to-morrow, or you'll put her in

her proper place. I won't have her running around the house half-dressed. If she's a maid, treat her as a maid. If you want a companion, get one—a real one. What does Polly say?"

"Polly hasn't seen her yet. I engaged her. I went all the way into the city to see her mother and find out about her. You know, Eddie, I'm paying her out of my own pocket, because I feel that Polly shouldn't be left alone."

"You ought to know better than to pick out a girl like this one!" he cried. "I'm disgusted. You're so anxious to get rid of the trouble of looking after Polly that you'd pick up any one, out of the street—any one cheap!"

He was very angry; his fair face flushed; he twisted his little mustache with a trembling hand.

"I'd like to see her——" he began again.

Angelica waited to hear no more. She rushed back to her own room and began to dress with frantic haste.

"Well!" she said to herself. "It's all up, now! I never thought it would last, anyway."

At length she was dressed, shabby and dusty enough in her street clothes, but feeling far better prepared for an encounter with the blond young man.

"All right!" she said. "All right! Let him fire me! I don't care. I never pretended to be any different from what I am, anyway."

She was defiant, but she wasn't resentful, any more than she would have been if the boss of a factory had reproved her. She had grown up in the consciousness that there were in the world people who had a right to get angry and to reprove—teachers, policemen, bosses, rich people.

There was a knock at the door, and a voice informed her sharply that Mrs. Russell was waiting for her. To her surprise and relief she found Mrs. Russell alone, and yawning.

"I suppose we'll have to go to bed now," she said. "It's after twelve; so I'll say good night to you."

“Good night,” Angelica answered.

She supposed that she was to be allowed to leave the room; but she had quite half an hour’s work still to do. She had to brush and braid Mrs. Russell’s short, curly hair; she had to go down-stairs again and fetch a bottle of spring water from the ice-chest; she had to put away dozens of things, and then to set out on the table lip-salve, cold cream, and some sort of medicine; and then to pull up the blinds, put out the light, and grope her way out in the dark.

She was in the habit of going to bed very much earlier; yet, once more in her own room, she didn’t feel at all sleepy. She lay stretched out on the bed, with her hands clasped under her head, meditating about Mrs. Russell, who was altogether outside her experience, and the blond young man with the little mustache. She wondered who he was.

“Her son, I guess,” she reflected. “Anyway, he’s pretty cross to her. I wouldn’t put up with it, if I was her. One of these rich young fellers, he is, and as spoiled as can be!”

Then she didn’t think about him any more; he was no longer the possible hero of her romance. He was so obviously not for her. Her beauty, her impudence, would never impress him. Her mind dwelt for an instant with a sort of shadowy regret upon his nice young face; then the current of her thought changed, and ran back into the channel it had made for itself—that of speculating upon her own future.

“My first night in this house!” she said. “I wonder what’s going to happen to me here?”

She couldn’t invent or imagine anything. Certainly she couldn’t even dimly foresee the truth.

CHAPTER FIVE

I

Angelica awoke early the next morning and dressed quickly, determined to be ready before Mrs. Russell could possibly send for her. She needn't have hurried; she waited from half-past six until half-past eight without hearing a sound. Time after time she opened her door and stepped out into the hall, to find it always empty and silent.

Finally she could tolerate it no longer, she was so much afraid that something was expected of her, that she was betraying her awful ignorance of rich people's habits. She decided to go down-stairs, find a servant, and make diplomatic inquiries about the daily procedure.

As she was going along the hall, who should come out of his room, directly in her path, but the blond young man.

"Er—good morning," he said, with a slight frown.

"Good morning!" Angelica answered, and in her desperation added: "Say, would you mind telling me, when does *she* get up?"

"Ten o'clock—somewhere about then. You'd better come and have your breakfast with me now. I'd like to have a little talk with you."

She followed him with a great assumption of carelessness—which, unfortunately, there was no one to see—down the stairs and into a little screened porch, where a willow table was laid. She was impressed by what she saw, but not astonished, for she was prepared for the utmost luxury. In fact, she couldn't have been astonished, no matter what she had seen, so greatly did the marvels of which she had read in the Sunday papers exceed any possible reality.

On the table stood a copper coffee percolator, shining in the sun like gold, and steaming softly; a nickel chafing-dish, bright as silver; cut-glass cream-jugs and sugar-bowls like diamonds; and a cloth of hemstitched linen. There were little willow chairs with chintz cushions drawn up before each place, and sweet fresh flowers. She was in no way disappointed.

She sat down opposite the young man, resolved to do exactly as he did. He unfolded an immense napkin, then picked up the morning paper, and for a few minutes studied the Wall Street news intently. Then, as the servant entered, he laid the paper down and sat immovable while she drew him a steaming cup of coffee, prepared it, and put before him a cantaloupe cut into halves and filled with ice.

"Bring this young lady's breakfast, if you please," he said, frowning again.

"Now, then, miss—what is your name?" he asked Angelica, when the maid had left the room.

"Kennedy—Angelica Kennedy."

"Miss Kennedy, I was speaking to my mother about you last night. I felt that it wasn't at all the thing to—for her to have engaged you as a companion. You're not qualified. It's not fair to Mrs. Geraldine, and it's not fair to you. You couldn't fill such a position."

He spoke with decision, with authority, but not in the least unkindly. He spoke in the manner which his business training had given him; and Angelica accepted it in the manner she had learned from her factory experience. He was arbitrary and supreme; useless for her to complain, to resent. She didn't even trouble to think whether he was just or not; simply, she was "fired."

"All right," she said, without emotion.

"Now," he said, "if you wish to remain in another capacity—if you wish to be Mrs. Russell's maid——"

"No, I don't."

“That’s for you to decide, of course; but it’s a pleasant, easy position, and the pay is better.”

“I’m not thinking so much about pay. I could have got plenty of jobs that would have paid twice as much as this. Only——”

“Why did you want this?” he asked, with interest.

“Well, I thought I’d——” Her dark face flushed. “I want to learn—nice ways. I want to get on. I don’t want to be—like I am, all my life.”

“You’re perfectly right!” he said, looking at her. “I’m glad to see you’re ambitious; but why choose this sort of way to get on? Why don’t you try to get into a good office?”

She shook her head.

“No! It wouldn’t do me a bit of good to get ahead in business if I—didn’t have nice ways. No! I watched the papers a long time for something I could have a try at, and then I saw Mrs. Russell’s ad, with ‘experience unnecessary.’ I knew I wasn’t the kind of girl that they want for a companion, but I thought if I could show ’em that I could be more useful than any one else, I might stand a chance.”

He was silent for a time, while the servant reëntered with a cantaloupe for Angelica and porridge for him. Then he looked up and studied her face.

“I think—if I’d understood the case better, perhaps——” he said. “But, anyway, why don’t you stay as my mother’s maid? There’s no use having a silly pride about such things. There always has to be a beginning.”

“No!” she said again. “There’s no sense in that. If I can’t be—oh, right in the family, kind of, it won’t help me. I’ll go. I couldn’t stand being a servant.”

He didn’t say any more, but continued his breakfast with hearty appetite, and with a dexterity which she found herself quite unable to copy. At last he had finished, and pushed back his chair.

“I’ve been thinking,” he said. “You’re evidently out of

the ordinary. I don't see why you shouldn't be given a chance—if you're really anxious to improve yourself." He rose. "I'll speak to Mrs. Geraldine this evening, when I get home," he said. "If she agrees, you shall stay. Good morning!"

He went out abruptly, leaving Angelica alone at the table. She jumped up in a violent hurry, before the servant could return and find her defenseless, and went out into the hall. She had no idea where to go, what to do; she was bewildered and rather miserable. The young man hadn't made any effort to spare her feelings. Suggesting that she should be a servant!

"He's got a nerve, all right!" she said to herself, but half-heartedly.

Really she thought that he was right in all that he had said, and that, in spite of his uncompromising frankness, he had been friendly. She liked him.

"But *she's* different," she reflected. "I won't let *her* trample all over me!"

She recalled the previous evening with burning shame. Those French words! She felt that Mrs. Russell had been unfair and unkind, and she went up-stairs, to find her, with deep reluctance. She was determined not to be meek and not to be frightened.

"You've got to act like you were somebody!" she said to herself. "You've got to show 'em you won't stand any of their nonsense. People take you at your own valuation!"

That was a favorite phrase of hers. She had read it often, and it quite fell in with her cheap and pitiful philosophy. It was true enough, too, among the people she knew—people who weren't capable of judging or analyzing a fellow being. She herself took others at their own valuation, because of an unconscious conviction that she was incapable of making an original appraisalment.

So, resolutely looking as if she were somebody, she knocked at Mrs. Russell's door.

"Come in!" said that suave and charming voice, and she entered.

She had expected to find Mrs. Russell still in bed, lazy and fascinating, and she was more or less surprised at finding her up and dressed, and scribbling away at a little desk. All her charm had vanished. She looked quite her five and fifty years; she was bony, sallow, horribly untidy in a green sweater and a short plaid skirt that showed her knoblike ankles and her great feet. It was rather surprising to see her hair coming down so early in the morning, a coil of it slipping out under her jaunty little hat. It gave her a most unpleasant, haglike look.

"Golf this morning!" she cried cheerfully. "Damn these letters! They'll have to wait. Now, my dear, I'll take you to Polly, because I'm in a hurry to be off. Mind what you say, won't you? She's so exacting! Make friends with her and stay near her. I've absolutely got to be gone all day—I've promised so many people at the Country Club, and I've got to get in a lot of practice before the big match. It's a wonderful game, but it makes a perfect slave of you. It's so fatally easy to lose your form. I take it so seriously. I worry myself ill over it. Come on!"

Angelica came after her slowly. She didn't know whether she ought to say anything about her talk with the blond young man—whether he expected her to do so. Before she had decided, Mrs. Russell was knocking on a half-open door, and a voice bade them come in.

Angelica had had a preconceived idea that this daughter-in-law would be young and beautiful, a pampered darling. She was somewhat taken aback by the reality. There was a woman lying in bed, reading a newspaper, which she politely put down when they entered—a woman of forty, dark, sallow, with heavy eyes. She was apathetic and weary, but she was not dull; there was a quiet intelligence in her glance; she was indifferent without being uninterested. She was like a very tired but pleased spectator at a play. There was

a charm about her lassitude, a lingering handsomeness which she made no effort to retain.

"Good morning!" she said, with a smile.

"Good morning, Polly! Did you have a good night? I don't believe you did, you poor soul! I couldn't get you out of my mind. I couldn't sleep, thinking about you. I would have come in, half a dozen times, only that I was afraid of disturbing you, if you *had* dropped off. And it worried me so to think that I had to leave you to-day! But it couldn't be helped. I've absolutely got to go to the dentist."

"Like that?" asked Polly, glancing at the other's costume.

"My dear, of course not! I just put these on to do a little gardening. I was up so early; I thought I'd look after your beloved plants a bit."

"Now, why does she tell such lies?" thought Angelica. "Can't she see that that woman doesn't believe her?"

"You're going out again, then?" asked Polly, with just a shade of reproachfulness in her voice.

"My dear, I'm obliged to go to the dentist's——"

"You won't be home to lunch, then, I suppose?"

"But you shan't be alone!" cried Mrs. Russell brightly. "I've got Miss Kennedy here—the daughter of an old, old friend of mine!"

And then began a new series of the most preposterous lies, flowing in a bland, untroubled stream. She said that Angelica's father was a clergyman living in the country, and that Angelica was going to be married, and that her mother had sent her to stop with Mrs. Russell while she bought her trousseau. She added a great deal of the grossest flattery about Polly's superior taste.

"I advise you to consult her in everything!" she ended, turning to the astounded Angelica. "Now, then, I've got to fly. You two must have a nice, comfy chat!"

And she whispered to Angelica as she went out:

"Just till she gets used to you, you know. Then we can tell her!"

II

Polly lay back on her pillows, looking at Angelica. She didn't ask her to sit down. Angelica returned her gaze resentfully and miserably, ashamed of her preposterous position, but quite helpless, having no idea how to extricate herself. She didn't feel able to say bluntly that Mrs. Russell's story was a lie, although she could see that Polly was suspicious—more than suspicious—and she was certain that she could not sustain any sort of examination.

"When did you come?" inquired Polly.

"Last night."

"Alone?"

"No; she brought me."

"Mrs. Russell, you mean? And she says she was a school friend of your mother's. I wonder what school!"

"I don't know."

"Does she often visit your mother?"

"No."

"Then, as a matter of fact, you don't know her very well?"

"Never saw her till the day before yesterday."

Polly smiled.

"Aren't you afraid you'll feel rather strange here? How long do you expect to stay?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? I've forgotten—where did Mrs. Russell say you lived?"

"In New York."

"That's odd—very odd! I certainly understood her to say you lived in the country."

Angelica was dumb.

"Where in New York? I know the city so well."

"At the Ritz," said Angelica boldly.

She was quite desperate now. She was sure that Polly

saw through her, and that it was only a matter of time before she was shamefully exposed.

"At the Ritz!" exclaimed Polly.

Their eyes met in a long and hostile look.

"Yes, at the Ritz," Angelica repeated.

"Why do you tell me that?" asked Polly quietly.

Angelica's swarthy face grew scarlet.

"You needn't think this was my idea!" she cried. "I don't try to pass myself off as—some one different. She hired me, and I told her all about myself. My mother's a janitress, and I worked in a factory!"

Polly's face had flushed, too.

"What was the idea in trying to make you my companion?" she asked. "Did Mrs. Russell imagine I shouldn't know the difference? Or perhaps she thought any one was good enough for me!"

Angelica was a hardy young devil, but this was too much even for her.

"I'm not—just any one," she muttered, with a quivering lip. "I'm not—dirt. I'm——"

"My dear child!" cried Polly, in sudden compunction. "Of course not! I didn't mean to offend you in any way. I've nothing against you personally; it's simply that I don't want a companion at all. I—I can't endure the idea of a person who is paid to amuse me—a stranger, who doesn't know anything about me or the child I lost!"

She waited a moment, then she went on.

"I'm very sorry. It's an awkward situation for both of us. Mrs. Russell has done it before. You see, the doctor said I was not to be left alone—all nonsense, but Mr. Eddie took it very much to heart, and he wants Mrs. Russell to stay with me. Naturally she finds it irksome, shut up in the house. If I can't have a familiar face, then I'd rather be alone. I'm sorry, but it's no use your wasting your time, my dear. You might be looking for something else." She held out her hand with a kindly smile. "Good-by!" she said.

Angelica didn't move.

"I saw that Mr. Eddie," she said; "and he said he was going to speak to you about me. He said he'd keep me if you would."

"But what has he got to do with it?" asked Polly, smiling.

"Well, at first he thought I wouldn't do; and then, after he thought it over, he said: 'Well, I'll agree if *she* will.'"

Polly was silent, perplexed to know how to get rid of this tenacious young creature. Angelica seized the opportunity.

"Well," she said, "I'm sorry I came, bothering you; but as long as I'm here, hadn't I better stay till she gets home again? I'm better than nobody!"

III

It was the longest day Angelica had ever spent. She didn't go out of the room; even lunch was brought to them there. She sat, answering whenever she was spoken to, but for the most part silent, looking out of the window at the country landscape, which held nothing to interest her gamine eye, and watching the clock. She couldn't believe that something wouldn't happen.

She tried, in her very crude way, to study Polly, but she had no success. She watched her lying for long stretches of time with her eyes closed, whether asleep or awake it was impossible to divine. Her face in repose was profoundly mournful, and, unrelieved by the fine black eyes, looked older and more worn. Her mouth had a kindly line, but it was the disillusioned, cynical kindness of one who expects no gratitude.

"I suppose she's Mr. Eddie's wife," reflected Angelica. "Well, she's certainly a lot older than he is—ten years, I'd say. I wonder why they call her Mrs. Geraldine, when her name's Polly!"

This detail puzzled her greatly. She fancied it must be

some custom of rich people. Perhaps Polly was a nickname for Geraldine among them. It didn't occur to her that it was a surname; she took it for granted that Polly was young Mrs. Russell.

Little by little, as always, her thoughts drifted off to her own future.

"I wonder how it 'll be when I'm married? Anyway, I bet you'd never catch me moping around like she does! If I was rich like her, and got sick, I'd have lots of flowers, and friends coming in all the time—everything nice and pretty and bright; and a trained nurse, too, I guess."

It must be admitted that Angelica had little sympathy. She had a certain amount of facile generosity. She had moods when she was willing to do a great deal for any one she liked; but it was impossible for her to put herself in the place of another, to compassionate any pain which she had not actually felt herself. Losing a baby seemed to her a grief of small significance. She had seen very little of babies, and wasn't interested in them. To her, at nineteen, the only comprehensible sorrow was that of losing a lover.

She regarded Polly with irritation. She was rich, not too old, not too bad-looking; why didn't she try to throw off this lethargy of grief and take some advantage of her opportunities? The life of a rich person, as seen by Angelica, was a very fantasy of gaiety. It might be gaiety covering a broken heart, if you wished, but always gaiety. The proper course for such as Polly would be to plunge into a whirlpool of excitement, and just reveal, from time to time, by a shadow stealing over her face, that her heart was broken. No, decidedly she could not comprehend this woman lying there with closed eyes, brooding over her immeasurable loss.

Polly, however, through her greater sophistication and experience, and through her native shrewdness, found Angelica no puzzle. Now and then she asked her a well-calculated question, and she soon learned that Angelica had

apparently spent all her nineteen years in learning, quite unconsciously, whatever would be useful in a lady's service. She had spent innumerable Saturday afternoons sauntering through the big shops with girl friends, until her mind was richly stored with information. She knew just which place was best for any given article. She had compared styles and prices, and, with the amazing discernment of her sort, she had even distinguished among the various grades of customers. She knew who the really best people were, where they went for things, what they wanted, and what they paid. She knew things one wouldn't have imagined her knowing—smart, out-of-the-way little shops for perfumes, for sweets, for lingerie.

Of equal or perhaps superior value was her deftness. She could manicure, she could dress hair; she had picked up, God knows how or where, an almost professional knowledge of make-up. She could sew, she could embroider, she could quite marvelously trim hats. She told all this to Polly, because she wanted to convince her of her usefulness. And she did.

Long before the afternoon was over, Polly had made up her mind that this girl would be valuable and likewise agreeable. She liked her, liked her lovely face and her husky, oddly touching voice, liked the character which she so ingenuously displayed. Here was a girl passionately anxious to please, yet without servility, who was at once ignorant and intelligent; one whom she could command, yet on whom she could lean.

However, she didn't show any such approval. Who would, indeed, toward a person being employed?

IV

The light had all faded out of the sky, and the big room was nearly dark. To Angelica, who never sat still, who was

not formed for meditation, it was depressing to remain there in the deepening twilight, with no idea how much longer this wretchedness would endure. Polly didn't stir; all the house was still.

Her imprisonment was terminated by the sudden entrance of Mr. Eddie.

"Light the lamp!" he cried sharply. "You're an idiot, Polly, to sit here in the dark like this! You—Miss What's-Your-Name—you mustn't let her. It's very bad for her. Try to keep her cheerful."

He had turned a switch as he spoke, and five electric lights had flashed on, making the room as brilliant as a stage. He looked anxiously at Polly.

"Eating better?" he asked. "I've brought you some oysters—something rather special. Are you coming down?"

"Not to-night, Eddie, thank you; but I'll enjoy the oysters. Is your mother home yet?"

"No. I shan't wait for her. I told Annie an early dinner. Half-past six sharp, miss! I've brought home a lot of work to do."

He went out again, with a curt nod at Angelica.

"You'd better get ready," said Polly. "He's not very patient. He doesn't like to be kept waiting."

"I am ready," said Angelica. "I haven't any better clothes to put on."

She had risen, and was standing near the door. She knew that Polly wished her to go, but still she lingered, miserable but resolute.

"Did I do all right to-day?" she blurted out.

Polly opened her eyes.

"Why, certainly, my dear," she said. "Would you mind putting out all the lights but one?"

"But doesn't he want it cheerful?"

"I think it'll be more cheerful that way," Polly answered, with a faint smile. "Now, then—thank you! I think I'll rest until dinner-time."

"But were you satisfied with me?" insisted Angelica.

"Of course I was."

"Well, do you want me to stay? Because he's coming to talk it over with you. Will you tell him that you want me?"

"Yes," said Polly. "I do want you—very much!"

CHAPTER SIX

I

Angelica was very nervous about having dinner with Mr. Eddie. He was obviously fastidious and hard to please, and she hadn't the vaguest idea what his standards might be. She did what she could with her appearance; she washed her hands and face and brushed her hair, and then, having no watch or clock to advise her, went down-stairs.

She hadn't been in the dining-room before, and she stopped, profoundly impressed, in the doorway. It was so exactly the dining-room she had expected—the grand, stately dining-room of the cinema drama, with paneled walls and sideboard loaded with plate, the opulently set table, the high-backed chairs, the flowers all about, the very air of dignity and richness.

There was the essential butler, too. She felt sure that the man bending over the sideboard was a butler; busy, no doubt, with work about which she was quite ignorant. She drew near to ask him the time, and was surprised to see him stuffing cigars into his pocket from three or four boxes that lay in a drawer. She didn't know whether this was proper, whether it was part of a butler's proper functions; but when she saw the man's face, and observed his stealthy and hurried manner, she grew certain that he was stealing. One of those society thieves of whom she had read!

He was in evening dress, and he had some sort of perfume about him. He was a slender little man with neat, snow-white hair and a dapper white mustache. His face was bland, with a long upper lip that gave it a humorous look, and intelligent blue eyes.

He turned suddenly and saw her.

"Well!" he cried. "Upon my word! And who are *you*?"

"That's my business," said Angelica.

This was her idea of a non-committal answer. She could not decide whether he was a servant, a member of the family, or merely an outside thief who had dropped in, and she was anxious to make no avoidable mistakes.

"Of course it is!" he replied, cheerfully. "No doubt I'll learn in the course of time. But perhaps you'll enlighten me as to your status?"

She didn't understand him, and she scowled.

"Perhaps you'll tell me what you're doing here?" he inquired.

"Well, what are *you* doing here?" she returned.

"Waiting," he answered imperturbably. "Waiting for dinner and Mr. Eddie."

"Oh, him! Well, he's in. I saw him up-stairs."

"But do, for pity's sake, tell me who you are! We don't take pretty girls wandering about this house as a matter of course. You're quite a startling vision, you know."

She didn't like his airy gallantry; but she was sure now that he wasn't an outside thief or a servant, and that he must therefore be a member of the family, entitled to answers for questions.

"I'm *her* companion," she said.

"Aha! And what is your name, if you please?"

"It's Kennedy."

"Oh! Scotch, are you? You don't look Scotch. You look like a French girl, I should say—one of these dark, passionate creatures. . . ."

"All right!" she interrupted, scowling more heavily. "That'll do about me. What's the time?"

He pulled out his watch.

"Six-thirty. Do you dine with us, Miss Kennedy? I hope so. I feel——"

Just then Eddie came in, also in a dinner-jacket and in-

credibly neat—the very model of a correct young man. He bowed ceremoniously, if somewhat severely, to Angelica.

“Good evening, doctor!” he said to the white-haired man.

He touched an electric bell with his foot. The parlour maid came hastening in.

“I said half-past six!” said Mr. Eddie.

“Yes, sir, I know; but cook——”

“No excuses! You can certainly get some sort of dinner ready for me when I ask for it. Now hurry up! Never mind about what’s ready and what isn’t; just bring me *something* at once.”

He pulled out a chair for Angelica, and they all sat down in silence.

“Good Lord!” said Eddie suddenly. “What a life! I’m tired as a dog, and I’ve got to work all evening.”

“Too bad!” said the doctor. “Anything I could do, my boy?”

“No, thanks.”

There was silence again. The soup had come in, and Mr. Eddie gave it his undivided attention. He ate with amazing rapidity, one course after the other, and he expected to be served without an instant’s delay. Neither the doctor nor Angelica had ever finished when he had, and their plates were always whisked away with choice and coveted morsels on them. There was no sort of conversation—nothing more than Mr. Eddie muttering, with his mouth full, “All right, Annie!” and having one plate replaced by another.

But this was as Angelica liked it. She didn’t wish to talk or to be talked to; she wanted to sit at that table, with two men in evening dress, to contemplate the silver and china and linen, and to reflect with amazed delight upon her situation. A dream fulfilled!

Cautiously she surveyed her two companions—Mr. Eddie, looking rather harassed, and as oblivious of her as if she were invisible to him, and the dapper little white-haired man, whose eye often met hers with a glance stealthy and

curious. She decided that he must be Polly's physician, and a man who must be given no leeway. She had seen his kind, standing outside stage entrances, with walking-stick and boutonniere and a smirk, or on corners where working girls passed on their way home.

Instantly he had finished, Mr. Eddie got up and went over to the sideboard, from the drawer of which he took the three rifled boxes. He didn't seem to notice that they had been tampered with, but passed two to the doctor.

"Help yourself," he said. "I got these from a chap who imports them for private consumption. Put a couple in your pocket. They're good."

The doctor helped himself modestly from both boxes, and sniffed at them.

"Ah!" he said. "I can tell! My boy, you can afford to indulge yourself; you're one of the lucky ones."

"Yes," said Eddie. "Nothing but luck, of course!"

"I didn't mean to disparage you," cried the doctor. "No one appreciates what you've done, and how hard you've worked, better than I. Just a little joke, Eddie!" He pushed back his chair and rose. "I'll have to run out and fetch your mother home from the club," he said. "*Au revoir!*"

Mr. Eddie followed him so quickly that before she knew it Angelica found herself left alone at the table. She, too, hastened out of the room and up-stairs, and in a sort of panic knocked at Polly's door.

"Who is it?" inquired Polly's voice, languidly.

"Angelica!" she answered, forgetting, and hastily added: "Kennedy."

"I don't need anything this evening, thank you. Good night!"

She turned away, completely at a loss. It was only half-past seven, hours before bedtime. What was she to do?

She went into her room. It was as charming and comfortable as she had remembered it, but it offered no pros-

pect of amusement. She didn't know whether she ought to go into the library or any of the rooms down-stairs. She wanted to, but she had a dread of being spoken to by a servant.

"Well, I'll take a walk, then," she said. "No one can say a word against that!"

She put on her jacket and her rakish big black hat, and went sauntering down the hall. She had to pass the open door of a room, and in it she saw Mr. Eddie, writing. He saw her, too.

"Hello!" he cried. "Where are you going?"

"Out for a walk."

"Better not. It's dark and lonely around here."

Angelica had paused.

"I've got to do something," she said.

"Sit down and read," he said, rather impatiently.

"I don't like to read."

"Nonsense! Here, come in! Sit down! I'll give you something you'll like."

But she hesitated. His bedroom! Surely he didn't expect her to go in there?

He did, though.

"Come in! Come in!" he cried, and she obeyed.

She couldn't really believe that there was anything evil or dangerous about this worried young man sitting before a desk covered with papers. He tapped the back of a big armchair.

"Better take off your hat," he said. "It keeps off all the light."

She turned over the pages of the book he gave her, pleased to see that it had a great many pictures, and began dutifully to read. In spite of herself she became interested.

It was the third volume of a series, "Magnificent Women of the Past," and it contained sketches of the lives of the Empress Josephine, Mme. du Barry, Mme. de Montespan, Mary Stuart, Lady Hamilton, and many others. It was

sensational, impossible stuff; but Angelica was neither a well-informed nor a discriminating reader. She was enthralled by this description of courts, of gallantry, of balls, fêtes, and levées, of kings, emperors, and princes; above all, by the radiant women who ruled over this amazing world.

She went on, page after page, stopping only to study the portraits of the dazzling beauties. She had never imagined anything like this. Of course, she had studied what was called history in the public school, but that was entirely concerned with battles and treaties; not a word of woman, except, very rarely, an entirely respectable heroine. She had thought of kings and queens as rather dull and solemn persons, also concerned with battles and treaties. She had never conceived of such a passionate and colourful and exciting life as was revealed in this book. It was a life unfortunately impossible in this actual world.

She came to the end of the life of Mme. de Montespan as imagined by the author, and closed the book, the better to reflect upon it. She sighed; she was disturbed by dim longings for an existence of this sort. She was full of dissatisfaction and preposterous ambitions. She was so immersed in the scenes of court life and in the pictures her imagination created that it was almost a shock to see Mr. Eddie sitting there in front of her, still working.

She stared at him thoughtfully. A nice-looking boy—perhaps something more than that. His face was boyish, but in no way weak; the features were all good, fine, firm, regular. She fancied—still dreaming of what she had been reading—that he looked like a young prince, that there was something in his brow, in his presence, that was noble.

Her glance wandered round his room. It was austere, handsome, immaculately neat. She liked it; it was manly.

Her roving attention had distracted Mr. Eddie. He looked up, frowned, and leaned back in his chair.

“Well?” he asked.

“It’s a nice book. I like it.”

"That's right. I'm very glad. Take it with you and finish it. It'll do you good."

"How can it?"

He ran his fingers through his hair and survey her thoughtfully.

"In the first place," he said, "it's a very good thing to read history. I read a great deal of it—lives of famous men, and so on. In the second place, it'll give you some idea of what a woman can do."

"Yes, I know; only they're all bad women," said Angelica, with simplicity.

Eddie flushed.

"Yes, but—everything was different in those days. They didn't have our opportunities. Anyway, in some of the other volumes there are plenty of women who weren't bad—Romans, and so on. What I meant is that it shows you what an influence a woman can have if she tries."

"I guess they didn't have to try."

"Of course they did. They wanted to be powerful. They wanted to be magnificent. There aren't any women like that now—no more magnificent women."

He fell silent, to think for a time of his mother, of Polly, of the clerks in his office, of girls he had danced with, of girls on the stage, of all his limited feminine acquaintance. Not a vestige of magnificence!

II

He was a queer chap, was Eddie. Born of a selfish and frivolous mother and a morosely indifferent father, neglected, left in the care of servants of the sort that always collect about an extravagant and careless mistress, he had never acquired as a matter of course those ideals which the average boy of his class takes for granted. He had a perfectly natural inclination toward truth, honour, and justice,

and toward clean living, but he had had to discover these virtues laboriously, all alone. In consequence, he gave them a sort of perverted importance. He became somewhat of a prig.

And having with such difficulty discovered his truths, he was inclined to be a bit domineering and intolerant about them. He was angry and disappointed at finding any one imperfect.

What is more, he was for the first time in his life finding himself a person of some importance. Always before he had been under a disadvantage, always conscious of his "queerness," of having a mother who was a laughing-stock and a father who was a scandal. He was priggish and unsociable, but he wasn't a scholar. He had done very badly in all the various schools to which he had been sent by fits and starts; and when at last he had been somehow got into college, he had done still worse. He had hated his failure there; he had so longed to be popular and friendly, and had been so markedly neither.

So he had gone into business at nineteen, and he had found himself at once. He did amazingly well. He had a clever, sympathetic, imaginative brain, he had good judgment, he knew how to handle his people, how to deal with men; but at the same time he had not very much common sense.

He was like one of those musical infant prodigies, so shamelessly exploited by their families. He had this amazing talent for making money, and the people about him, well aware of his virtue and his innocence, had known perfectly how to make use of his ability. He was a cruelly driven slave to his exalted idea of family obligations.

Eddie wasn't aware of it, however. He was willing to spend all his youth in acquiring money for other people to spend. He took a sort of pride in exhausting himself. He was young enough and strong enough to enjoy affronting his health. It seemed to him a noble thing to support one's

family. This was one of his pet ideas—ideas which he had got from books or from other people's talk, none of which had developed quietly and wholesomely from childhood, or from experience. His instincts were sound and admirable. He practically never had a base impulse; but his ideas were grotesque. He was, in some respects, a fool, and he was treated as fools must always be treated by the self-seeking.

There was truth in Angelica's fancy. There was something in this boy that was what men chose to call kingly—a generosity, a fine force, a self-forgetfulness, a profound sense of his obligations, even toward this waif, so recently brought to his attention. He believed it his duty to help her.

"Why don't you go into business?" he asked her abruptly.

"Why?"

"I think you'd do well. You seem level-headed. And there'd be some sort of future in it, instead of pottering about here like an old woman."

"But I don't like business. I like to be here, with nice people, where I can learn something."

"That's quite right, of course; but what will you do—later?"

"Well—I don't know, exactly. I just think that if I can—sort of improve myself—some sort of chance will come some day."

She reflected a moment.

"All these magnificent women," she said. "They just kind of waited round for something to turn up, didn't they? I mean, they didn't plan what they were going to be. I haven't thought it all out; but I mean to—oh, to go *up* all the time, to get to be somebody!"

Eddie, unconscious of his own infantile innocence, smiled at her naïveness, but admired her.

"I'll see that you get a chance," he said. "And I'll help you to learn, if you like. If you'll study, I'll give you what spare time I can."

"All right," said Angelica. "That'll be fine! Only," she

added, "what I want isn't exactly things you study out of books. It's—good manners, and the right way of talking."

"You'll pick up all that from Mrs. Geraldine," returned Eddie. "You couldn't find a better model. By the way, how did you get on with her to-day?"

"I guess she liked me. She said she wanted me to stay."

"That's good!" he cried, very much pleased. "If Polly'll take an interest in you, you'll be absolutely all right. She's a splendid woman."

"But she's so much *older* than you!" thought Angelica. "It's so queer!"

"Yes," he went on, "Polly's one of the best. Of course she's not herself now, losing the little chap. He was nearly two years old, and a fine little fellow. Poor girl! She was wrapped up in him. We all were, for that matter."

Angelica was puzzled.

"But," she said, "don't you——"

"Don't I what?"

"I mean—it must be nearly as bad for you as for her."

"*What?* Why, there's no comparison between a son and a nephew."

"For Gawd's sake! Wasn't he your son?"

"Of course not! My dear girl, you didn't think I was Polly's husband, did you?"

"Yes, I did," she faltered.

"I'm her brother-in-law. She's my brother's wife."

"Oh! She's a widow, then?"

"No, no, no! He's alive. He's here, in this house; but he's a poet, you know, and when he's working he shuts himself up for days at a time. He's a queer chap—a regular genius."

"That's pretty hard on his wife, I should say."

"That's what the wife of a fellow like Vincent must expect. He is a bit trying, but you have to make allowances. He's very remarkable—writes beautiful stuff."

"I don't like po'try," said Angelica, who had already taken a dislike to this brother.

"I'm not very fond of it, either, but I admire it."

"I don't," she persisted.

"You shouldn't say that. It's childish. Every one admires poetry."

She maintained an obstinate silence. Eddie was rather at a loss. He believed that every one ought to admire poets; he faithfully endeavored to do so, and had made himself believe that he had succeeded. He felt that his brother was a genius, accountable to no one, and not to be blamed for faults which seemed to Eddie peculiarly disgusting and unmanly; but he didn't know how to make Angelica admire his brother. Even the fact of Vincent's genius was by no means established, and could not be demonstrated to an outsider, for he had never published anything yet, nor attempted to do so.

"He's a very interesting chap," Eddie said. "Very!"

"Well, I'm glad he's not my husband," said Angelica. "Shutting himself up like that—wouldn't suit *me!*"

Eddie frowned.

"I should think it was a privilege to be the wife of—of a genius."

Again Angelica was silent.

"Of course," said Eddie, "I don't pretend to understand him. We've never seen much of each other. He lived with my father and I lived with my mother. He was brought up differently—a Roman Catholic, for one thing; then he went to an English university for a year or two, and he's traveled. Very well-educated chap; altogether different from me. A scholar, and very artistic."

"What does he do for a living?" Angelica asked.

"He's just beginning his career," said Eddie. "It is very hard to get started with that sort of thing."

Angelica's silence was eloquent.

"Then who's this feller you call 'doctor'?" she asked abruptly. "Does he live here?"

"That's Dr. Russell, my mother's second husband."

"Oh, I see! I had you all mixed up. But whose house is this—his?"

"No. It's mine."

"Yours? Do they all live here with you?"

"Certainly," he said, reddening and frowning. "I want them to. I don't want to live alone—no social life."

Poor devil! He was conscious of something ridiculous in his position, and yet he was proud of it. There weren't many fellows of his age who could have done this. It had meant taking fearful risks, of course, and working without rest, but the worst of it was over now. He was really prominent in his world; he was a sort of financial prodigy, admired and watched. He called himself, on his office door, a stock-broker. He was on the road to becoming a millionaire; he had made up his mind to do it, and there was nothing to stop him.

"Well," said Angelica, "you're awful good to them."

Again he frowned. They had both grown suddenly ill at ease, at a loss for words. Angelica got up.

"Good night!" she said abruptly. It was her way of terminating an awkward moment.

"Good night!" Eddie answered, rather absent-mindedly.

With her volume of "Magnificent Women" tucked under her arm, Angelica went back into her own room.

"He's a fool," she said to herself, "keeping all those people; but there *is* something about him. I don't know—I guess he's kind of magnificent himself."

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

Sharp at ten o'clock the next morning Angelica knocked at Polly's door. Her eyes were dancing, she was filled with an exhilarating sense of mischief, for she had been having breakfast with the doctor, and a regular rowdy breakfast it had been—the old delightful badinage of the street and the factory.

When she had come down the dining-room was deserted, and she had lingered about waiting for any one who might come. Presently, in had come the dapper little doctor. His face had lighted up marvelously when he saw her there alone; and he had told her archly that she was welcome as the flowers in the spring.

"That's all right!" Angelica had retorted, belligerently. "Never you mind about me!"

And so the conversation had proceeded, flowery compliments on his side and a continuous show of resentment on hers—all as it should be.

"You're a regular old devil!" she had told him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"You're a devil yourself!" he had answered. "A young devil, and a dangerous one, too. You could teach me a trick or two, I dare say!"

Then she had thrown a piece of bread at him, and he had sprung up and smothered her in a napkin, almost upsetting her chair backward, and she had given his necktie a terrific pull. She did so like this sort of thing!

She had a familiar and delightful feeling now toward Polly, such as she had so often felt toward teachers at school

and foremen in factories—that she had something up her sleeve, that she was slyly outraging authority.

“Come in!” said Polly.

She was still in bed, her breakfast, untouched, on a tray beside her. She looked stale, broken, weary in body and in spirit, miserably inferior to the sparkling girl who stood waiting for her orders.

“Good morning! Sit down,” she said, politely enough.

She could say nothing further. Weary from a sleepless night, sick with grief and longing, lonely as a traveler stranded on a desolate shore, it seemed to her impossible to communicate with any one about her. She could think of no words that they would comprehend, no answer from them that would give her any possible solace.

She seemed to Angelica a sallow, listless woman of forty, who persisted very selfishly in staring out of the window and preserving a tedious silence. She had no faintest idea of that anguish of a fine and strong soul.

“Would you mind——” said Polly suddenly. “There’s a little leather book in my desk, and a fountain pen. I’d like to write a little.”

Angelica jumped up and brought them to her with alacrity. She felt very obliging this morning.

“Anything else I can do?” she asked cheerfully.

“No, thanks. It’s my diary. It’s just seven weeks ago that my child died.”

She spoke quietly, but her face had assumed an odd, drawn look.

“Oh, Lord!” thought Angelica. “Now I suppose there’ll be a scene. And me feeling so happy!”

But there was no ‘scene,’ not even a tear. Polly had long ago got past that consolation. She put down her little book.

“Will you go and ask Mrs. Russell, please, when she wants to use the car? I think I’ll go out this afternoon.”

Angelica sped off, glad to be released from this terrible

ennui, and knocked upon Mrs. Russell's door. She found her engaged in a surprising occupation. She was carefully rouging her cheeks—that tough, weather-beaten, brown skin!

Her hair was carefully dressed, and she wore a handsome embroidered white linen frock. She was tall and straight, with good shoulders and a fine, free play of limb. From the back she wasn't bad, she looked like a muscular and athletic young woman until she turned and one saw her face. With the rouge and the blackened eyebrows, it had an indescribably repulsive look of dissipation; it was as if a man had rouged and bedecked himself.

"Well!" she said. "How do I look?"

"All right," said Angelica dubiously.

"Tell me frankly if there's the least thing. I must be very nice to-day. We're giving a lunch to a young English woman, a tennis champion, and I'm on the reception committee. Do I *really* look nice?"

"Yes," said Angelica, in a still more doubtful tone.

"You don't think so!" cried Mrs. Russell. "I can see that! But, my dear, I don't suppose a woman of my age ever can look very nice."

However, the glance she gave to her reflection in the mirror was quite a complacent one. She began covering her face with pink powder, while she talked; and grimacing as she carefully avoided the blackened eyebrows.

"How did you get on with Mrs. Geraldine?" she asked.

"All right; she's not so bad," said Angelica. "Only sort of *dopey*."

"'Dopey'? What's that?"

Angelica flushed.

"Oh, like people that take *dope*—morphine and opium and all that."

"But my *dear* girl, Polly doesn't——"

"I *know*. I only said she acted like people that do. It's just a word people use about any one that's quiet and——"

"Mrs. Geraldine's very reserved—quite different from me. I'm obliged to say everything that comes into my head. But I dare say her life has made her like that."

"Why has it? What kind of life has she had?" asked Angelica, with naked curiosity.

"My dear, you see, she was married before to a perfectly dreadful sort of man. He drank, and I don't know what else—absolutely no good at all. You see, she used to be a concert singer when she was young. It's very interesting to hear her tell about her days in Germany, when she studied there. And then she came back to New York and got an engagement to sing in one of the first-class restaurants. She really comes from a *nice* family—Ohio people—not in society at all, but *nice*. They weren't at all well off, so I suppose they were glad to have her earning her own living. Anyway, they were away off in Ohio, so they couldn't have stopped her very well, could they?"

"No," said Angelica, astounded at the very idea of the melancholy Mrs. Geraldine singing in a restaurant.

"She must have been quite a pretty girl," Mrs. Russell went on. "I've seen pictures of her. She says she had the most distressing experiences with men, following her, and so on. She says she was really just about to give up the restaurant singing when one night this tremendously handsome man was waiting for her when she came out. She says he was so different from the usual sort—so gentlemanly, and so on; and *he'd* been so impressed with *her*. My dear, have I too much powder on?"

"Yes, on your forehead. Who was this feller—the handsome one?"

Mrs. Russell stared at her in perplexity. Then she suddenly recollected the subject of their talk.

"Oh, yes, of course! He told her afterward that he was so much impressed with her refinement and distinction. I suppose she did look well, standing up on the platform in a white dress. And her voice is charming. He walked home

with her that night and they were married three weeks later. Of course, as she says, she didn't really know him at all; and he turned out to be perfectly dreadful. She went through the greatest misery with him. He was killed in an accident; he was in a taxi with some chorus-girl. I don't really know much about him; she doesn't like to talk about him, but I've seen a picture of him. He *was* handsome, but coarse, I think. He was quite successful in his business, whatever it was, but he spent all he made, and only left her a tiny little income. She made it do, though, she lived so quietly."

Angelica was delighted to get all this information. She leaned against the doorway in one of her careless, beautiful gamine attitudes, her dark eyes on Mrs. Russell's face with an attention that pleased that veteran gossip.

"She's a charming woman. Still, I was amazed at Vincent, of all people! She's so much older than he—years, and she shows it. Of course, when they were first married three years ago, she was quite different—much nicer-looking. Poor soul! She really had a wretched time with Vincent. He's frightfully trying. I really think she's been wonderfully patient with him. I'll never forget the day he came into my room and told me he was married. I couldn't believe it; he's so fickle and erratic. I never expected him to settle down. I don't suppose he really has. And when I saw her—simply a plainly dressed woman of thirty-five! Of course, she has a certain sort of charm about her; she's *restful*. I like being with her—but not all the time. I can't understand why she clings to me so. She's so self-reliant."

How indeed was Mrs. Russell to understand all this? She with her thistledown heart, her life of infantile amusement-seeking, to understand the solitude of this woman from a small town, accustomed to the friendly faces of neighbors, of people who had known her all her life and were interested in all that concerned her; this woman who had twice given

her love with simplicity and generosity, to have it twice despised, a wife without a husband, a mother bereft of her child? Polly hadn't a soul near her who took the least interest in her, *no one to talk to*. That was what made her so silent. She didn't, she couldn't utter flippancies; she longed for one of her own good, earnest, kindly small-town women, who would wish to listen and know how to console.

And in default of this, then she must have Mrs. Russell, who could at least talk about her lost child. She could say to her, "Do you remember this day and that day, this that he said, and how he looked?"

She had loved her child with a passion tiresome to all those about her. She had been absorbed in him; she had seen in this little boy not alone her only child, but her only friend, a fellow countryman in a hostile land. And now he was gone.

"She's charming," Mrs. Russell repeated; "but I should never have picked her out for Vincent. She's not the sort of woman to hold him. He's so odd, you know. He always used to say that he'd never marry, and that he was looking for the perfect woman, whatever he fancied a perfect woman was. I don't know what it was he saw in Polly. She's not beautiful, or fascinating, as far as I can see. Of course, there's her voice. It's lovely, but still—— He met her at some sort of tea, he told me, and he said that he was enchanted by the sight of her, sitting there in her plain dark blue suit, with her hands folded, so quiet and clever, you know, in comparison with all the other women. I must admit I was disappointed."

She paused for a few minutes, to rub her big square nails with pink paste. When she began to talk again, she had unaccountably changed her point of view. Instead of her bland contempt for Polly, she had, somehow, within her queer soul developed a great indignation against her son.

"He has behaved abominably," she said, with a frown. "I can't understand him. For days at a time he doesn't speak to

her; doesn't even see her. And all for nothing! He took her up in a caprice, and he's dropped her in another caprice. Do you know, my dear, all the time their child was so ill, he wouldn't see it? He said he could do nothing to help it, and he couldn't bear to look at suffering. And at last, when it died, the thing became so scandalous that Eddie had to go and actually force him to come into its room. So he came sauntering in, and what do you think he said? 'Thank God I really hadn't had time to grow attached to it yet.' "

"That was pretty bad," said Angelica. But she was more curious than shocked; she was eager to hear more about this atrocious Vincent.

"And now," went on Mrs. Russell, "whenever the poor soul begins to practise, he comes stamping out of his room and shouts down the stairs, 'Stop! Stop! For God's sake, stop!'"

"He must be pretty selfish!"

"Selfish! That's not the word. He squeezes every one dry. He bothered me a while ago until I sold one of my rings to get money for him; and as soon as I'd handed him the money he walked out of the room without even saying, 'Thank you.' And when I tried to speak to him, he didn't even stop; just called back to me, 'I'm not in the mood for your conversation to-day. I couldn't endure it.' He's a devil!"

"A devil!" thought Angelica. "I wish I could get at him! I bet I could handle him! I'd like to see him, anyway. I'd devil him! And maybe if he had a wife with more fight in her, more spirit, he'd be different. He'd be different to *me!*" her secret heart cried. "No man could ever neglect or hurt *me*. No man could ever really win me. I shall be loved, adored, obeyed, but I shall not give much. I am Angelica, the beautiful, the proud, the free!"

She was very ready to hear more, but that was not to be.

The aggrieved voice of Courtland, the chauffeur, was heard in the hall.

"Now, then, do you want to be late?" he called. That reminded Angelica of her errand.

"Oh! Mrs. Geraldine said to ask you when did you want to use the car. She thought she'd go out."

Mrs. Russell stared at her in distress.

"Oh, pshaw! I never imagined she'd want it. Tell her, please, I'll send Courtland back with it in an hour."

"I don't think!" said Courtland. "She better not hold her breath waiting."

Even Angelica was aware that this was not the proper way for a chauffeur to address his lady. She was surprised that he wasn't rebuked. She looked at him with an indignant glance, which he returned with one of the greatest scorn.

"Wait in the car, Courtland," was all that Mrs. Russell said. "I'll be down directly."

"He's a nice boy," she told Angelica, after he had gone. "I think a great deal of him. I'm sorry for him. He's very bright and intelligent, but he hasn't had any opportunities."

"He's mighty fresh," said Angelica.

"You mean disrespectful? I know it; but it seems to me that in this country, you know—a republic—we should expect that sort of thing. We're all more or less equals, I suppose, aren't we?"

Angelica said yes; but she didn't think so, and she knew that Mrs. Russell didn't think so. A game of exploitation, simply but in a country where every one had the pleasing possibility of becoming one of the exploiters.

Angelica went back to Polly with the message.

"She says she'll send back the car in an hour."

"Then I think I'll get up and dress," said Polly. "We'll run into the city for lunch. Do you know, I feel better! I think you're doing me good."

She really believed so; it seemed to her that the fierce and careless vitality of this girl charged all the atmosphere, penetrated and invigorated even her jaded and sorrowful heart. It was not the sort of vitality that fatigues and irritates, like the ceaseless activities of a little child. Angelica was quiet, for the most part; she didn't speak much, she sat quietly in her chair, with the sort of cool steadiness that one notices in cats. When you spoke to her, it required no effort for her to attend, to concentrate her thought on you; at once her dark face was alert, her ready mind in action.

With Polly—although she wasn't aware of it—her manner was exactly what was needed. She was generally quite indifferent, thinking her own thoughts, absorbed in her own affairs; but she was instantly willing to perform any service, or to talk, or to listen.

"Mr. Eddie spoke to me about you," Polly went on. "I have a very high opinion of his judgment, and he seems to think you're just the person for me."

Angelica was delighted.

"Well," she said, in her pitifully ungracious way, "it's kind o' hard, not knowing your ways or anything; but I guess I'll be useful."

Polly smiled.

"Help me to get ready, won't you? I haven't been out for such a long time; and the doctor seems to think I should."

"This doctor, is it? *Her* husband?"

"Oh, no! He's not exactly a doctor. He invented a patent medicine, called Dr. Russell's Old-Time Rejuvenator. That's why they call him doctor."

"I see! But those things are mostly fakes, aren't they?"

Polly didn't answer.

Angelica enjoyed helping her to dress. She liked to open bureau drawers and wardrobes and see the well-ordered and dainty things, all faintly fragrant. She liked fetching the silk stockings, the fine little handkerchiefs, the gloves,

all the accessories of a woman of excellent taste and a decent income. Very plain, Polly's things were, but with a most refined and fastidious plainness. Angelica, seeing and handling them, gained a quite new idea of a lady's requirements.

II

"And there we sat," she told her mother later, "all the morning, like a couple of fools, waiting for the car. It got to be lunch-time, and still it hadn't showed up. I couldn't help feeling sorry for her, waiting there with her hat on and all. 'I guess she's decided to keep her automobile for herself to-day,' I said. 'It isn't hers,' she said. 'It's Mr. Eddie's, for us both to use.' He's a generous feller, I think."

The excursion was given up. They had lunch down-stairs together, and in the afternoon they went out for a little walk—a tiresome walk for them both. Polly said scarcely a word. Angelica believed her to be angry, and at five o'clock, when at length the motor came back, with Mrs. Russell in it, she looked forward to a row.

She received another lesson, for Polly said nothing. She had tea in the library with her mother-in-law, and she was as agreeable and polite as if nothing at all had occurred to vex her.

At first this conduct appeared to Angelica cowardly and shockingly hypocritical; but as she watched Polly, she changed her opinion. No, it wasn't hypocrisy; she didn't pretend to be pleased and friendly. Her attitude said to Mrs. Russell, in effect:

"Do as you please. You can't annoy me. I remain absolutely undisturbed."

And as Angelica observed them, first to see how tea was to be drunk, and later to ponder, a new idea struggled to life in her mind. It began to dawn upon her that there were

grades among ladies, and varieties. Mrs. Russell was a lady, and Mrs. Geraldine was a lady; but they were of quite different sorts, and Polly's sort was the better.

So there wasn't simply a set of rules to follow, or a definite standard to attain. There wasn't even one absolutely correct manner. How was one to learn? How was one to imitate?

"My Gawd!" she reflected. "There's more to this than I thought!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Perhaps, if Polly had imagined that she was serving as a model, or even that she was being shrewdly observed by Angelica, she would not have done what she did. She would have maintained the aristocratic imperturbability that had so impressed her companion, and she would have concealed her malice. For Polly had malice—that agreeable feminine malice, so much more attractive than a forgiving heart. She had a quiet relish for vengeance, and a long, long memory for affronts.

For three years there had been war between herself and her mother-in-law, in which Polly had had to struggle desperately to avoid extermination. The ruthless selfishness of Mrs. Russell would have destroyed her, would have made her an instrument to serve her in her pleasure-hunt. She was not to be reasoned with, she was too heedless and indifferent to weigh consequences, too insolent to be hurt by defeat, too slippery for any sort of compromise. Polly had adopted a policy of implacability toward her. She let nothing slip, forgave nothing, forgot nothing.

They were all at the dinner-table that evening—Eddie in evening dress, and the doctor also, in order to please his punctilious and severe son-in-law. Polly was an altogether pleasant object for contemplation in a brown voile frock, while Mrs. Russell had come forth in an astounding thing of orange and blue. It was shockingly expensive, very unbecoming, and badly put on. Taken with her straggling hair and a pair of dusty and shapeless black velvet slippers, it formed an exterior not likely to enlist her son's support in the coming encounter.

"Eddie!" said Polly. "What was that man's name—

the one we had for the day when the car was broken? Do you remember? He was such a good, careful driver, and his car was so nice and clean!"

"Why do you want to know?" asked Eddie suspiciously.

"I thought to-day I should have liked to get him."

"What's the matter with Courtland and your own car?"

Eddie persisted sharply.

"But it's not my own car, Eddie."

"Where was it?"

"It was in use. I can't expect to have it *all* the time," she said sweetly.

"You haven't been out for seven or eight weeks, have you?" he demanded.

"No; but still——"

"That's not exactly 'all the time'!" His face had flushed.

"Did you have the car, mother?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered with perfect indifference.

"Now look here!" he said. "Can't you arrange better? Can't you talk with Polly in the morning and find out what she intends to do?"

"Oh, Eddie, it doesn't matter!" cried Polly in distress.

Eddie saw the distress and grew more angry. Angelica saw it also, and understood it.

"It seems to me," he said, "that when Polly goes out so seldom, she might have the benefit of her own car. She's not well—you must remember that."

Mrs. Russell was smiling her mechanical smile.

"She shall have the car," she said, "whenever she wants it. If I'd known to-day, I shouldn't have taken it."

"I meant to ask Angelica to ask you," said Polly.

"I did ask her, too," said Angelica.

"No," said Mrs. Russell, still smiling. "You didn't. You forgot, I suppose."

"Were you out in it all day, then?" demanded Eddie.

"My dear boy, I was. And now, if you please, we won't have any more of this. You can do your scolding in private.

Polly shall have the car all the time. Tommy!" she said, turning to her husband. "Who do you think I had lunch with at the Country Club but Horace and Julie Naylor? Poor Horace! She is such a dreadful, vulgar little minx! And yet she's so amusing. I must have her down here again."

"Not when I'm home," said Eddie. "I think she's disgusting."

"Pretty little woman, though," said the doctor.

"Plenty of *them!*" said Eddie.

Mrs. Russell had got away from the subject of the motor-car, and rested satisfied. It was a question with Angelica whether, after all, she hadn't triumphed. It was a drawn battle, at the best.

But before the evening was over the combatants were obliged to forget their hostility and to ally themselves against their common tyrant. All very well for them to quarrel together, but they didn't forget that Eddie was the source of all good, and that, to placate him, all private feuds must be ignored.

They were still sitting at the table when a telegram arrived, which Eddie opened and read with a frown.

"Confound it!" he said. "Here's a nice row! Vincent's getting a bit *too* bad. This really puts me in a very awkward position. I gave him a letter to give to a man, and apparently he never did. I'll have to get hold of him now, and find out what he did do with it."

He rose from the table, and so did Polly and Mrs. Russell.

"What's the matter?" cried Polly, with an anxiety that seemed to Angelica extreme. "What has Vincent done?"

"I gave him a letter to deliver to a man who was leaving for San Francisco—an important letter; and now the fellow telegraphs that he's reached there, and that the letter hasn't reached him yet. He should have got it a week ago, before he left.

"But don't bother Vincent to-night!" implored his mother. "You can't do anything now. Wait till morning!"

"Why shouldn't I bother him? He's bothered me enough! I'm not going to humour him in this damn fool idea of shutting himself up like a—— He'll have to behave like a human being!"

Polly laid a soothing hand on his arm.

"Do wait till the morning, Eddie," she said. "You know it's at night that he does his best work, and it seems a pity to disturb him."

"What about it's being a pity to disturb me while I'm eating my dinner, to try and rectify one of his beastly, inexcusable blunders? No, by Jove, I'm entitled to *some* consideration! He's got to come out and tell me what he did."

"Do wait!" cried Polly.

He looked at her in anger and distress.

"Don't you *understand?*" he demanded. "It's important. I've got to find out what he's done with my letter. I've got to know at once—even," he added with irony, "at the risk of disturbing Vincent. I haven't seen him for three days."

"Oh, do wait!" cried Mrs. Russell.

"I won't!" he answered.

Striding out of the room, he began to run up-stairs. To Angelica's great amusement, the two women followed him. She followed, too, of course.

"Oh, Eddie!" implored Mrs. Russell. "Don't be so head-strong! Wait! I'm sure he's asleep."

"He can wake up, then. It's only eight o'clock."

"Or maybe he's working, and if you interrupt him he'll be so vexed!"

"*He* vexed!" cried Eddie, outraged. "It seems to me that I'm the one to be vexed!"

Proceeding at once to his brother's room, he knocked at the door, waited, and then knocked again.

"Vincent!" he called. "Open the door! I want to speak to you!"

He knocked louder and louder. Polly again touched his arm.

"Eddie!" she said, in a low voice. "You're making a dreadful noise. Why *don't* you wait? To please me!"

"It can't really matter," said Mrs. Russell. "You couldn't really do much at this time of night."

"No," said Eddie. "I could have waited, but now I won't. There's something damned queer about it. He can't help hearing this row."

"But you know how peculiar he is," said Mrs. Russell. "He wouldn't answer if he didn't feel like it."

"I'll make him. I won't put up with this!"

He had turned away and was starting down-stairs.

"Where are you going?" called his mother.

"I'm going to get Courtland, to help me break in the door!"

Mrs. Russell drew near Polly.

"What do you think we'd better do?" she whispered.

"I don't know," Polly answered in distress. "Even if he would wait till the morning, I don't see just what we could do. Perhaps we'd better——"

Mrs. Russell nodded.

Eddie returned promptly, bringing with him the blond young chauffeur, pleased and alert.

"Which door?" he asked. "This? All right! Now, then, all together! One——"

"No!" cried Mrs. Russell. "No, Eddie. Wait a minute!"

He did wait, but impatiently, while she hesitated. Finally she said to him in a half whisper:

"Eddie, *he's not there!*"

"Not there?" he shouted.

"Do hush! No; he's been away for three days."

"Why the devil didn't you tell me?"

"Because I didn't want to upset you."

"Did Polly know?"

"Yes; she——"

"And you both stood there and let me make a fool of myself?"

"I couldn't bear to upset you, Eddie, and neither could Polly."

"And you let me knock and call and bring up Courtland. Oh, by Jove, it's *too* much!"

"I'm very sorry," said Polly gently.

Eddie didn't even look at her.

"I'm sick of this!" he cried. "Sick of being made a fool of like this. It's always the way in this house; every hand's against me. Nothing but deceit and trickery!"

"Eddie!" said Polly firmly. "You forget yourself!"

The poor chap, recalled by her tone to his standard of propriety—the very fount of his exploitation—became a little quieter.

"No," he said, "I don't. Where did he go?"

"To New York," said Mrs. Russell. "He had a bag with him. Courtland drove him in."

Eddie turned suddenly upon Courtland.

"Why didn't you tell me he wasn't there?" he demanded.

"How did I know he hadn't come back?" retorted Courtland, smartly.

"Where did you leave him?"

"Corner of Broadway and Forty-Second Street," said Courtland, and, with his unquenchable impudence, he added: "But you won't find him there now!"

"That'll do," said Eddie. "You can go. And don't gossip about this."

Courtland wheeled about briskly and began, quite leisurely to descend the stairs, whistling cheerfully and loudly before he was well out of sight. Eddie did not even appear irritated. He had turned toward the two ladies of his household with an ominous look in his blue eyes.

Eddie was incredibly generous, he was kind-hearted and

more or less sympathetic, but he had in him, all the same, the making of a first-class domestic tyrant. He desired, almost morbidly, to be respected, and he was ready to force respect by bullying, if necessary. He knew what every one else knows, moral precepts to the contrary notwithstanding—that the bully is almost universally respected.

Like all domestic tyrants, he was shamelessly deceived and “managed” by the women of his establishment. They managed him clumsily. Neither of them had learned what the doctor had learned at once—that Eddie could be manipulated with ridiculous ease by the employment of either of two means. One was to appeal to his sense of justice; the other was deferentially to ask his advice.

He liked to argue, to discuss, to weigh, to do finally, not without pompousness, whatever he saw to be right; but the women never addressed this vulnerable side. They treated him still as if he were a primitive man, to be coaxed, hoodwinked, pampered, in spite of the fact that he was not primitive in any way. He got along splendidly in his office, because there it was acknowledged unanimously that he was not to be diddled, that he was no fool; but at home he was always treated as if he were a fool, and a slightly dangerous one. That is, of course, the accepted attitude toward any master of any house, but it is not always the most effective.

His anger began to ebb away as he looked at them, and a profound dejection to take its place.

“It’s no use,” he said. “No earthly use! I do the best I can—for the entire family—to keep things as decent as possible; but I can’t. I get no help. I can’t do it alone!”

“But Eddie, my dear boy!” said Polly. “It was only to spare your feelings.”

He shook his head.

“It wasn’t. You have some reason which I’ll never know. I’m not blaming you, Polly. I know you do what you think is best; but if you’d only be *honest*, regardless of what might happen!”

He stopped, for he had caught Angelica's eye. He stopped, and his startled and arrested look said, almost as plainly as words:

"I believe *you* to be honest!"

He was as much surprised as if she had but that instant appeared. Indeed, one might quite truly say that he had never before seen her. She looked so hardy, so bold, so independent, in all ways so different from the two other women who had just humiliated him. He felt a new and sudden interest in her.

CHAPTER NINE

I

Angelica was consumed, devoured, by curiosity. She felt obliged to know more of this family—of Vincent, above all. So the next morning she got up very early, went down into the kitchen regions, and sought out a snub-nosed maid who had seemed disposed to be friendly when they had passed each other in the hall.

The girl wasn't busy. She was sitting on the back steps, enjoying the fresh morning; and as soon as she saw Angelica she moved over, hospitably, to make a place for her.

"Sit down," she said. "It's a nice day, isn't it?"

Angelica did sit down, and for a time was silent, looking before her across lawns as smooth and empty as those at the front of the house. Nothing at all back-doorish about the outlook; the same air of prosperous peace; in the distance other houses among their lawns, and well-trimmed trees, and overhead a lovely May morning sky.

"Yes," she said, "it's certainly a nice day."

She fell silent again, trying to arrange an opening for her questions; but the snub-nosed maid spared her the trouble.

"Well!" she said. "How do you like it up-stairs?"

Angelica at once perceived that the other girl was curious.

"Oh-h-h!" she said slowly. "I suppose it's all right."

Another silence, during which they appraised each other according to their tradition. A mutual confidence was born.

"They're a queer bunch," said the girl. "I never saw the like; and I've been with seven families, too."

Here she courteously gave Angelica a brief history of

her life and condition. Her name was Annie McCall, born in Scotland, but brought up in America, a member of the Plymouth Brethren, twenty-seven, and engaged to be married. She was extremely severe in her views, which were often similar to Angelica's, especially in regard to the immoralities of the rich. There was this difference, though—Annie was confident that she knew everything, and was infallibly right, while Angelica was anxious to learn.

"If it wasn't that I was going to be married," said Annie, "and saving every penny, I'd leave. The way they carry on! I never saw the like!"

"Do they carry on?" inquired Angelica, delighted.

Hadn't she always known that rich people carried on? Wasn't she just in a paradise of the romantic, where the rich were bad, and the poor, represented by herself and the terribly respectable Annie McCall, were good?

"That Mrs. Russell's the worst of them all," said Annie. "The bold, brazen thing she is, with her breeches and her smoking, and her cursing. You'd ought to hear her curse!"

"She's queer," said Angelica reflectively.

"Queer!" cried Annie. "Well, *I'd* call it more than queer! She's——" She stopped a moment. "She's bad," she said.

"Oh! Bad! How?"

"I don't like to be spreading scandal," said Annie, who always believed the worst. "It's not my nature, only that you'll be working up-stairs right with her, and you being so young, it's only right you should be told. As soon as ever I set eyes on you, I said to myself you'd ought to be warned. I could see you weren't used to such people. You never worked out before, did you?"

"No," Angelica answered.

It was of no use to resent the 'working out,' or to tell Annie that she was a 'companion,' because Annie knew very well what her place was. Angelica's eating with the family couldn't deceive her. They were both servants, and Annie was the better-paid and more respected of the

two. Angelica could not honestly consider herself in any way superior, except in appearance. Annie spoke rather better than she did, and had had more schooling; she admitted to money in two savings-banks, and she was engaged to be married. So Angelica submitted to a temporary equality, feeling morally sure, however, that the future would see her elevated immeasurably above Annie.

"How is she bad?" she inquired eagerly.

"She's a divorced woman," said Annie. "She divorced her first husband, Mr. Geraldine, and I've heard that he was a very nice man—much better than Dr. Russell, I dare say; too good for her, very likely. Anyway, I never heard any good of a divorced woman."

"But what does she *do*?" Angelica demanded, rather impatiently.

"You wouldn't believe it, but she's carrying on with that chauffeur."

"My Gawd!" said Angelica. "Is she really?"

"It's the worst I've ever heard of. Would you believe it? She's teaching him to play golf. They go out in the country somewhere, where they're not known. She's bought him a bag of clubs, and he goes around showing it to all the chauffeurs, and telling them I don't know what. He's a liar, and I wouldn't believe a word he said, but still—well, when you hear a thing right and left—and there's those clubs and all, and they cost a terrible lot—you can't help but think she's a regular bad woman."

But Angelica did help thinking so. She didn't believe that Mrs. Russell was that sort of bad woman, and the longer she knew her the more convinced she became of her perfect goodness in this one respect. Capable of the most outrageous follies, selfish, hard as flint, quite without scruples in the pursuit of her own liberty and pleasure, she was, however, not interested in men. Angelica said nothing, though, for she had no proofs or surmises to bring forward, nothing but her own instinct.

Annie continued.

"No, I can't help thinking so. I'm no fool. I've seen a lot—you do, working out. It's a pity, too, on account of Mr. Eddie. He's a nice young man, and he works himself sick for the lot of them. No one doing a stroke of work but him!"

"Don't that doctor work?"

"Dr. Russell? He's a regular old grafter, that's what *he* is."

"I saw him putting cigars in his pocket," said Angelica.

"I've seen worse than that. I've seen him going through *her* bureau drawers, and taking anything he has a fancy for. He'll come down with a flask, fill it with anything that's left in the decanters, and take it up-stairs and drink until he falls asleep on the floor. They say it's terrible bad to drink things all mixed together like that."

"Does he know about her carrying on?"

"He don't care, so long as he's got a good home and a little money to spend. I never saw such people in all my life! And they never have any decent company. Mrs. Geraldine——"

"Why do they call her Mrs. Geraldine?"

"Because that's her name," said Annie, surprised. "That used to be Mrs. Russell's name. It's Mr. Eddie's and Mr. Vincent's name. Didn't you know?"

"It's a queer name," Angelica remarked thoughtfully. "I thought it was her first name."

Nothing in the universe seemed specially queer to Annie.

"Well, as I was saying, Mrs. Geraldine, she hasn't any friends, except out West, and Mr. Eddie, he hasn't got any time to make any, and there's no one ever comes here but *her* lot from that country club—a lot of swearing, drinking, smoking men and women. She fills the house with them, and then Mr. Eddie'll make a great row and say he won't put up with them, and then she'll smile, that superior way, and

say, 'Very well, Eddie, it's your house!' Then, when she thinks he's kind of forgotten, she'll have them in again."

"But what's the other feller like?" asked Angelica.

"Him!" cried Annie. "Why!" she was at a loss for words to express what she felt. "He's——" She hesitated. "He's *crazy*, and downright wicked. They call him religious. Sacrilegious, I call it. Every once in a while he'll get a fit of feeling sorry for his wickedness, and he'll be moaning and groaning about his soul, and working himself up to write his religious poems. Why," she cried, "it's as different from the real repentance of a sinner, such as I've seen many and many a time in our meetings, as can be. He's never seen the light, and he never will. He's lost!"

"What does he do that's wicked?" asked Angelica, avid for details of rich people's sins.

"Everything—drink and women and blasphemy. Why, right now he's gone off with a girl. Courtland saw him meet her."

But no further questions on the part of Angelica could elicit any more details. Annie didn't want to talk about him; he was what she called a hardened sinner, and she considered him best ignored. She began to talk of Polly.

"She's the best of the lot," she said. "She's a real lady. She's reasonable. She'll never ask you for all sorts of outlandish things, all hours of the day and night, like the other one. She's stingy, I must confess; she never gives you a penny, nor even an old dress or a hat; but at least she's nice and polite. I'm sorry for her, too, losing that little boy. He was a sweet little thing, even if——"

The cook appeared on the porch—an untidy, bedraggled old Irishwoman.

"Come in, the two of ye!" she said. "Let your friend come in and eat a bite with us, Annie, if she's not too proud."

"You might as well," said Annie. "They won't be eating for another half an hour, and we've got just as good as they have."

"Better," said the cook. "You can trust me for that, Annie McCall!"

They went, not into the kitchen, as Angelica had expected, but into a nice little dining-room, to a meal served and eaten with decorum and propriety, a table daintily laid, and a breakfast beyond cavil—coffee with cream, beefsteak, cold ham, new-laid eggs, hot rolls, corn-bread, jams and marmalades, and a fine bowl of fruit.

The cook sat down behind the coffee-pot, with Angelica beside her. Presently in came the chambermaid, the German laundress, and a mild little thing known as the "second girl"; and, at last, swaggering, in his shirt-sleeves, Courtland the chauffeur.

His eye fell at once upon Angelica.

"Hello!" he said. "What's the matter? Did they kick you out up-stairs?"

"They sent me down to see how you behaved yourself," she answered, promptly.

She was quite able to hold her own with this young bully, and though her manner was too free and easy to suit Annie, the others were delighted—especially the cook.

"*Now* will ye be good?" she would cry to the worsted Courtland. "Now you've met your match, me lad!"

Angelica enjoyed all this beyond measure. This homely simplicity, combined with the greatest comfort, this atmosphere in which she lost her painful consciousness of inferiority, in which she was among equals and able to breathe freely, invigorated and satisfied her. She grew more and more assured, her sallies more and more outrageous, in a violent badinage that continued until the bell rang and Annie ran off up-stairs. She returned to tell Courtland that he was wanted in fifteen minutes.

"Oh, Gawd!" he groaned. "It's a tennis tournament to-day. Me sitting out in a blame country road in the hot sun all the afternoon. My Lawd! Don't I wish that old

fool'd learn enough to stay home, or go to the city, to the theayters and stores!"

"And giff you de chance to see your schweetheart?" asked the laundress, coyly.

"Which one?" he demanded, boldly.

"Ye'll need a lot of thim," said the cook. "For there's no one girl could put up with ye long. Why are ye not playing your golf to-day, me lord?"

"She makes me sick!" he answered, angrily. "There she goes and gets me interested in the game and all, and then she drops it. Why, you know, she promised me at the start she'd train me good and I could go in a tournament. She said she'd introduce me as a friend of hers. She said I was built to be a first-class player, and maybe I'd get to be a perfessional."

"Don't believe everything *she'll* be telling you!" said the cook.

"Damn old fool!" he muttered.

Annie reproved him.

"You've got no right to speak like that about a lady," she said.

"Shut up!" he said briefly.

"Go along with you!" cried the cook. "She'll be waiting."

"Leave her wait! She makes me wait enough. If she don't like waiting for me, leave her say so. I can get plenty of jobs—better than this one, too. I don't have to put up with nothing from her!"

II

It was only half-past eight, and Angelica didn't know what to do with herself. She was in a rebellious and malicious mood; she had been fired by Courtland's attitude, and she, too, wished to keep some rich person waiting. It was the attitude which is the despair of employers—the spirit

in which the young workman comes sauntering in, insolently late, not because he wishes to lose his job or because he is, as they put it, looking for trouble, but because, for this one day, this one hour, he must assert himself, must be a man, must delude himself that he is not inferior, not helpless, not driven.

So Angelica, this morning, was ready to assert that servants were in all ways better than those they served, that poor people were all good and rich ones all bad. She felt a warm glow of friendliness toward the subordinate class, and a profound hostility toward their oppressors. She wanted to swagger about it, to tell Mrs. Russell, loudly, that those jolly, comprehensible people in the kitchen were vastly superior to her in every respect.

She went defiantly about the lower floor, into the library, into the breakfast-room, where the remains of Mr. Eddie's meal still stood, into the music-room, even into the august drawing-room, where she had never before set foot.

"I don't care!" she said. "If they don't like it, they can tell me!"

But she met no one. Thwarted of a victim, she went out upon the veranda and sat down in a rocking-chair, facing the prospect already so monotonous to her—the neat, smooth lawns, the orderly trees, the dignified houses.

"Makes me sick!" she said, aloud. "Nothing to look at—nothing to do!"

Suddenly her chair was tilted back and a hand laid over her eyes—a soft, cool hand. She pushed at it, roughly, and it was lifted, and she saw bending over her the bland, smiling face of the doctor. He was in flannels, well cut, quite correct, but with an air obnoxiously dapper. His white head was bare, and he wore a flower in his coat.

"You let me alone!" said Angelica.

"I can't!"

"I guess you can!" she observed grimly.

"But you're so pretty! You've no business to be so pretty."

"I dare say I'll get over that in the course of time."

"Seriously," he said, "I don't think I've ever seen finer eyes. Have you ever thought of going on the stage? And as far as I can judge, you have a beautiful figure. Of course I don't *know*——"

"None of that now!" she cried, flushing angrily. "Get away from the back of my chair. I don't want you hanging around me, anyway."

"You're very hard," he said. "Very! Don't you like me, Miss Angelica?"

"Not much."

"But why?"

"Go and look in the glass, grandpa," she answered.

He reddened.

"I suppose I do seem old—in your eyes," he said; "but after all, it's only a question of how you *feel*; and I feel as young as you do. It takes a man of experience and maturity to appreciate a woman. Boys can't understand, but a man of my age has learned how a woman likes to be treated."

"Well, he's learned too late, then," said Angelica. "They'll never give him a chance to show off what he knows."

"Oh, yes, they do," he retorted, preening himself. "I could tell you of more than one little girl who doesn't think I'm too old. You, too, when you know me better, you'll find me just as——"

"Now, look here, grandpa," said Angelica. "What are you leading up to? Because if you think you can get fresh with me, you've made a big mistake. Guess again, grandpa!"

"Don't call me that!" he protested. "It's vulgar."

She looked at him scornfully, then turned her back upon him and once more regarded the tiresome view. The doctor, after a glance at her severe profile, gave up his attempt

and changed his attitude. He sat down jauntily astride of a chair and began joking. She never tired of that, and although he did, although he grew painfully weary of this rough and silly jesting, he was compensated by the sight of her brilliant face.

But inevitably he began to grow bolder again.

"My dear, your shoe's untied!" he said suddenly.

He threw himself on his knees before her and clasped her ankle in his hand. She gave him a vigorous push with her foot that sent him rolling over backward, knocking his white head against a chair. She laughed immoderately, with abandon, all the more because he was so furious, her head thrown back, her eyes closed.

And it was just at this minute that Eddie came out, to see his father-in-law struggling to his feet, while Angelica shrieked with laughter.

"What's this?" he demanded severely.

No one answered, but Angelica's mirth was checked.

"What has happened?" he asked again, with still greater displeasure.

"I slipped," said the doctor. "Where's your mother, my boy?"

This was an attempt to disarm Eddie by reminding him that the doctor was his mother's husband, and therefore venerable; but it was not successful. He received no reply, and went sauntering off with exaggerated jauntiness, watched by Eddie till he was out of sight.

Then Eddie turned to Angelica.

"I'm sorry," he said gravely.

"Oh, it don't matter!" she answered. "I can take care of myself all right."

"I wasn't apologizing for my father-in-law's conduct. I meant I was sorry that *you*——"

"Me?" she cried, indignantly. "I didn't do anything!"

"I hate to think of you stooping to this sort of thing—this silly vulgarity. It isn't like you. It isn't worthy of you!"

The former factory girl, with her long memory of scenes so much more vulgar and silly than this—of faces slapped and insults replied to with most forcible language—stared, astounded, at Eddie, at his displeased and disappointed face.

“You ought to be more dignified,” he said. “You say you want to improve yourself. Then, in that case, this sort of thing——”

She really had seen nothing reprehensible in her conduct, nothing to be censured. She knew, of course, that a girl in her situation mustn't spend her time in “fooling” with the men of the household; but to disapprove it on high moral grounds . . . !

However, the word “dignified” gave her a clue. It was those magnificent women he had in mind! She was falling short of their standard, and therefore disappointing Eddie. She wasn't being magnificent.

She looked up at him.

“I see!” she said thoughtfully. “All right! I'll try!”

“That's right,” he said. “I knew—if it were pointed out to you—that that sort of thing is so out of keeping with your character——”

“With your face,” he meant. He meant, without being aware of it, that any sort of coarseness in a girl so lovely and desirable was a shocking offense to him.

Angelica left him, inspired by the loftiest thoughts. She was resolved to redeem this day begun so inauspiciously, breakfasting with the servants, knocking over the white-haired doctor. She pictured a new Angelica, stately and aloof.

“He does me good—that feller!” she reflected.

CHAPTER TEN

I

It now became the aim of Angelica's life to satisfy Eddie. She felt that his standard was the right one, however painfully high it might be, and that he was genuinely concerned with helping her to attain it. And she felt that, in spite of his youthfulness and his somewhat grandiloquent air, he was a remarkable and an admirable man.

The more she saw of him, the more she admired him. She was a shrewd enough observer, yet she never detected in him a single lapse from his own rigid principles. What he set out to do, he did; what he determined to be, he was. She had not knowledge or experience enough to see that he was ignorant, crude, and childlike; she could see only his force, his strength of will, the earnestness of his ambition, and his complete ingenuousness.

He went directly to Polly. He told her that Angelica was ambitious, and that he wished to help her.

"So any evenings that you don't need her," he said, "she can come to me and study. I'll look out some books for her."

Polly smiled and agreed.

"It's another of poor Eddie's Utopian schemes," she said to her mother-in-law. "I don't know what he expects to accomplish with the girl."

"I only hope *she* won't accomplish anything!" said Mrs. Russell. "She's very pretty, and Eddie's so susceptible. Of course, he thinks it's a sin to think of a girl as a girl, but still——"

They didn't at all like this educational project, but Mrs.

Russell was too careless and Polly too sensible to interfere. Besides which, it didn't look really alarming. Eddie was not the sort—it would have been impossible to Eddie—to contemplate illicit relations with Angelica, and with his extreme propriety he was certainly not likely to consider marrying her. It was simply an annoyance to have her thus exalted. They were irritated and somewhat contemptuous, but they said nothing. They took care never to discuss Eddie in her presence.

It was a recognized fact that she and Eddie were allies. They were oddly alike in many ways. They had the same sort of careless austerity; neither of them cared whether a chair were comfortable or not, the soup hot or cold, the weather propitious; they disdained fatigue, were ready to work all day and all night to achieve an object, and had a fierce and driving ambition for power and distinction. But Angelica was coarser and stronger, while Eddie was more sensitive and very much more scrupulous. He was ruled by ideas, she was ruled by her vigorous impulses.

Polly very rarely wanted Angelica in the evening, and Mrs. Russell dared not summon her, so that it became quite a usual thing for her to go up-stairs with Eddie directly after dinner and settle down with some valuable book of his selection. He didn't make any attempt really to teach her; she could as well have sat in her own room to read, but that would have entirely destroyed the character of the thing for Eddie. She must be sitting there, under his eye, docile, earnest, his pupil.

Sometimes he worked, sometimes he was himself engaged with one of his instructive books, which he bought in sets; but whatever it was, he very rarely spoke to her. He maintained his pose of imperturbability, which she knew well enough to be only a pose.

It didn't take her long to see how it was with him. She understood that sort of thing so well! She saw how drawn he was to her, how she stirred his ardent blood; and she

rejoiced and brought out all her tricks to torment him. When she wanted something explained, she would bring her book to him and stand beside him, leaning against him, bending over so that her hair brushed his cheek. She had attitudes that were poems of allurements; there were certain tones in her voice, certain little gestures, which she saw enthralled and disturbed and shocked him.

"She doesn't know what she's doing!" he would think.

Well, she didn't exactly. She was well enough aware of the effect of her naughty wiles upon him, and upon other men; but she had never experienced the thing herself, never yet been transfixed by a dart such as she delighted to shoot. At first she was proud and gleeful; but after she had seen his painful effort to retain his dignity—his majesty, one might say—undisturbed, she felt a sort of respectful pity for him, and desisted.

She had no illusions; she didn't fancy that his inclination toward her was love; she never dreamed of marrying him, and she understood him and herself too well even to contemplate any other sort of alliance. She ceased her tricks, became honest and sober with him, and sat at his feet to learn what she could. The knowledge that she was desirable in his eyes did good to Angelica, for it gave her more confidence, more hope of attaining ultimate magnificence. She showed him her natural self, inquisitive, eager, strong, ready for any sacrifice, any denial, that might help her in her progress, a nature at once ardent and calculating, a cool, shrewd, subtle Italian mind.

As for herself, she wasn't in the slightest degree attracted by Eddie. She admired him and respected him, she felt a warm friendliness toward him, but no smallest trace of love or desire. It wasn't possible; he wasn't the man for her; he wasn't her sort.

In contrast, and running parallel with this life of effort and progress under Eddie's direction, ran the other existence, the lazy, soft life of the harem. One-half of her time she

was studying, reflecting, earnestly considering her manners and deportment; the other half she spent with Mrs. Russell and Polly, in a thoroughly demoralizing uselessness.

Laziness was Polly's darling vice. She had long passed the stage of struggling against it; now she hugged it, enjoyed it without shame. She lay in bed, in a chaise-longue, or on a sofa, hour after hour, smoking cigarettes, lost in her sorrowful reveries. Where on earth was she to find an incentive to activity? There was no one whom she might love and serve; no effort was necessary to obtain all the luxuries possible. Her old love of her art lay buried beneath her grief; she felt that she had all that she could ever expect in life.

She had got quite used to Angelica now, and more or less fond of her. She liked to have the girl near, sitting with one of Eddie's books; absorbed in it, yet instantly ready for any service required.

"Do you know, Angelica," Polly said to her one day, "the very nicest thing about you is that you never fidget!"

Angelica considered that.

"No," she said. "I know I don't. I see other people squirming and wriggling all the time, and I wonder—I don't know—I *am* quiet; but I've got lots of life in me."

"I should say you had! Just my antithesis, aren't you? I'm quiet, too, but it's because I haven't any life in me at all."

"Well," said Angelica, displaying no interest in Polly's state of mind, and reverting, as she generally did, to herself, "I'm always kind of expecting something to happen. So I just—wait."

Her naïve egoism never affronted Polly. Disillusioned, she would have been rendered uneasy by affection or great interest; she liked it this way, with no pretense on either side, nothing to keep up. She never affected any interest in Angelica, although she couldn't attain her companion's supreme self-absorption. She was obliged, now and then,

to ask a question; in fact, she couldn't help being curious about Angelica, who was not at all curious about her.

She was sometimes a little piqued by the young creature's cool assumption that she was of no interest. She knew, as all other people know, what lay within herself, how different she was from every one else who had ever lived, how interesting she was, both in her qualities and her experiences, a thing true of every one; and yet how impossible it is to make others see it!

Polly was a woman of curious temperament—intense, sensitive, flexible, and yet protected and perhaps isolated by a certain cool good sense. She was an artist, a musician, a woman who had twice loved and twice been most cruelly deceived and rebuffed, who had suffered and thought very much and very bitterly, if not very profoundly; but she was also the simple daughter of a small town, a woman who liked a long and leisurely gossip, who had sane and healthy blood flowing beneath her idle hypochondria. Woman of the world, smoker of cigarettes, reader of the most astounding books, seasoned as she was, disillusioned, heart-sick, a bit theatrical, perhaps, in her utter indifference, she was nevertheless the same Polly who would have heartily enjoyed a day spent in jelly-making, or nut-gathering, or sewing with a friendly and talkative group of her own Ohio women.

She had very little in common with Mrs. Russell. They didn't really like each other, but being unoccupied, and in somewhat similar circumstances, they got on well enough together. The whole household got on together, in fact. There were intrigues, incredibly petty and subtle struggles and plots, but nothing overt.

The other two women accepted this new favourite of Eddie's with resigned tolerance; they made use of her, but they were quite kind. They, too, had an influence on Angelica; they taught her something, a little of the compromise that must be made with life. You didn't have to love people or to hate them—you had only to get on with them. She

could not but admire their charming good-humour, their complete lack of the aggressiveness which the people she had known before had been obliged to cultivate. They were all three so *comfortable* together!

II

It was one of those summer afternoons which had such an indescribable charm for Angelica. She wasn't used to idleness, and it delighted her, this sitting about, with a long stretch of empty hours ahead, to fill as one pleased. They were all in Mrs. Russell's big, airy room, with the green blinds drawn down and flapping in a steady little breeze. It was very hot, and, as was their custom when Eddie was not home, they were in undress. Polly hated the hot weather, and didn't care to move; she lay on a rattan couch, smoking, with her eyes closed, and with an electric fan blowing across her.

Mrs. Russell was stretched out in a deck chair; beside her stood a small table with a bottle of whiskey and a siphon of soda, of which she partook from time to time—very small drinks, but tolerably frequent. Her face was crimson; her hair, for greater coolness, was pulled back into a tight knot; she wore very little but a lace combing-jacket and a short silk petticoat, which, as she sat with her long legs crossed, showed a great expanse of gray silk stocking. She was a freak, a fright, whatever you like, but she had a certain ineffaceable distinction. Her voice, her gestures—Angelica watched her with interest. She was telling jokes, outrageous stories that convulsed the other two with laughter.

"My dear! *Where* do you hear such things?" Polly protested after each one, and lay waiting for more.

Angelica rejoiced in a lovely cast-off garment of Mrs. Russell's, light as gossamer, pale yellow, with taffeta bows.

Its coquetry was incongruous with her dark and somber face, but it was bewitching, nevertheless. She sat in a low rocking-chair opposite a mirror, content to look now and then and to speculate endlessly upon the destiny of that thin, languorous figure, dressed like a rich person, lounging like one, beautiful, mysterious, alluring.' Her bare arms were clasped behind her head, in that attitude which so well reveals the line of neck and bust. Seen from the door, in profile, she would have been an exquisite picture.

And she was seen from the door. Mrs. Russell, facing in that direction, gave a start of surprise, so that Angelica turned and saw a man standing there.

He was a big, heavy, swaggering fellow, in baggy knickerbockers and an old shooting-jacket hanging loosely from his powerful shoulders, with a fierce, hawk-like face and bright gray eyes. He looked at them with a sort of contemptuous amusement.

"*Vincent!*" cried Mrs. Russell.

"Well?" he asked, smiling.

"Eddie's been so——"

"Eddie be damned! How are you, Polly?"

"Quite well, thank you, Vincent," she answered with simplicity.

"You're looking better," he assured her in friendly manner. "And mamma?"

"Don't be so provoking!" she cried, trying to be angry, but at heart, as one could plainly see, filled with idiotic admiration for this big, impudent son. "Don't pretend to be so calm and cool! What are you going to tell Eddie?"

Angelica jumped up from her chair, and then sat down again. Vincent took no notice of her.

"Let's have a drink," he said, and sat down beside his mother. "Ah! And now another!"

He was certainly theatrical, playing to his little audience the part of the idolized conqueror, the man to whom every-

thing is permitted; but he did it well. He could carry it off; it was evident that he had them both in his pocket.

He talked to them with conscious mastery. His mother was silly and adoring; Polly, in spite of all her reserve and her deep and hidden resentment against him, couldn't hide a sort of charmed interest. They listened to him and looked at him, while he, sprawled out in his chair, smoked a pipe and stared at the ceiling.

And then, suddenly, just for an instant, his falcon glance rested upon Angelica, upon the swarthy face that turned pale beneath it. Her heart stood still; she stared at his bold, careless face with a feeling that was almost like terror. She had never seen his like before, never seen so free and strong a spirit in any human creature.

She had met her match, and she knew it. She could never conquer him! It was a sensation unique in her life; never imagined before, never to be experienced again. She forgot herself completely, didn't give a thought to the impression she might be making upon this man. She thought only of him, watched him, listened to him, in a sort of stupour.

He didn't look at her again, but she knew that he was conscious of her, and that he included her among his audience. He went on, always like an adored actor secure of rapt attention, telling them things, painting vivid pictures for them. In the midst of his finest phrases, he would use the coarsest and bluntest of old words, abruptly, like a gross insult in a love sonnet. He aimed deliberately to startle and amaze, and he succeeded. The three women listened spell-bound; Angelica above all, quite caught in his net.

He told them about a play he had seen the night before, and an actress in it who had caught his fancy.

"That woman!" he said. "Good God! A fair, thin virgin—inviting with her troubled eyes the fiercest lusts—still innocent, still trembling on the threshold of her life. What an actress! Polly, you would have enjoyed her work."

"I don't doubt it, Vincent."

"I'll take you some evening soon. But no, I forgot. I'm going away."

"Oh, Vincent, *again?*" cried his mother.

He looked at her with a strange smile.

"Yes," he said, "and for a long time."

Polly, so many times hurt, so long ignored, remained quite still and indifferent. Only Angelica saw her thin fingers clench, and then open listlessly. She didn't open her eyes or speak.

"Where?" asked his mother.

"You ask me?" he demanded. "I am a man. Pray, where should I go?"

No one was able to answer, and he frowned again.

"There's only one destination possible," he said; "one spot on earth that draws toward it all of us who are men—a place of blood and destruction, of utter loneliness and frightful agony, where we rush to embrace that most maddening and most tender of mistresses——"

"Oh, Vincent!" cried Mrs. Russell, distressed. "Don't talk that way before Polly!"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"A mistress who breaks all hearts—of whom all loving souls are mad with jealousy—a mistress to whom no man is unfaithful—beautiful Death!" he cried.

His mother gave a sort of shriek.

"Vincent! You're not going to kill yourself?"

"No!" he cried. "No! To kill my brother!"

"*Kill Eddie?*"

"Don't be such a damned fool!" he said, irritably, annoyed that she had misunderstood and cheapened his climax. "I'm going to the war."

Until that moment they had, to tell the truth, taken very little notice of this war. It had been going on for some weeks, with great head-lines in the papers, but in their isolated group it had very little significance. Their routine

was in no way interrupted. Eddie worried over it, but then he worried over everything. He said it was disastrous for the market. However, they were quite sure that he would bring home money for them, if not in one way, then in another, and they weren't really disturbed.

And now suddenly the war and Vincent came bursting in upon them with violence.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I

Vincent, of course, had to go out of the room at once after that declaration, leaving the three women astounded.

Mrs. Russell was the first to bestir herself. Perhaps because she was conscious that her emotions were so feeble, she always strained to emphasize, to exaggerate them. She at once affected a great excitement. She began rushing about, under the pretense of "getting Vincent's room ready," and telling the servants that Mr. Vincent was home.

"And he's going to the war, Annie!" she cried. "Isn't that *dreadful*?"

Polly took no part in this movement. She went back into her own room and sat down before her dressing-table.

"I'll do my own hair, Angelica," she said, with a new frigidity in her manner that surprised her companion.

"All right!" Angelica answered, with a trace of sulkiness.

"You can go if you like," Polly went on. "I won't need you any more to-night. I think, Angelica, you'd better have your dinner in your room. Mr. Geraldine might not like a stranger at the table the first evening he's home."

"All right!" said Angelica again, turning obediently to the door.

But she did not attempt to conceal a most provoking smile—to show Polly that she knew the cause of all this.

She went trailing back to her own room in the yellow negligée, and shut herself in, happy enough to be alone and unobserved. After all, what did it matter if she couldn't come down to dinner, couldn't see him at all that evening? She could think about him; she could recall his

face and his voice; rejoice again in that unaccountable thrill.

She leaned back in her chair, her arms clasped behind her head, a strange and divinely stupid smile on her lips. Just at the threshold of love she was lingering, in that little moment before there is desire or pain, when love is without substance, without thought, a dim ecstasy, with no more motive, no more basis for its joy, than the dream of an opium-smoker.

"Gawd!" she said to herself, with a grin. "I guess I'm hit *this* time, all right!"

II

There was a knock at the door. She went leisurely to open it, with the expectation of seeing her dinner served on a tray; but it was Eddie, the loyal Eddie, come to fetch her. He was rather pale and quite unsmiling.

"If you'll get dressed," he said. "We're waiting for you to come to dinner."

"Mrs. Geraldine said——"

"It doesn't matter. You must come. I wouldn't sit down without you."

He looked at her, and his face twitched. She looked so strange, so terribly aloof! He was unstrung, anyhow. He had had a beastly interview with his brother, and a somewhat unpleasant five minutes with Polly, whom he so much admired. He had really annoyed her, for the sake of this devilish girl. He was filled with dread and distress, with a wretched sense of impending calamity—what people call a presentiment. Perhaps it was because his mind unconsciously recognized all the elements here for a hellish conflagration.

"Hurry, won't you?" he said. "We're waiting."

She did hurry, and her dressing took only ten minutes; but she was very much surprised to find Eddie still waiting for

her, and still more surprised when he took her by the arm and for the first time used her name.

"Angelica!" he said in a low voice.

"What?" she asked, startled.

"Don't!"

"Don't what, Mr. Eddie?"

He didn't answer, but he squeezed her arm, and when she looked up into his face it was desperately anxious.

"All right!" she said, half understanding what he wished her to understand.

For she, too, was vaguely aware of danger; she, too, could dimly perceive whither her eager feet were leading her; but she ran to it, flew to it. She, too, had an odd and terrible feeling of approaching ill fortune. She felt disaster drawing near, yet was not able even to wish to avoid it.

She sat down at the table, next to Vincent; and she hadn't been there for fifteen minutes before she was lost. His bold eyes rested on her face, and all her own boldness turned to surrender, her own fierceness melted. She couldn't turn away from him; she sat very still, enthralled, listening to his voice, watching his mobile face, the fine, straight brows moving so expressively, his supple hands.

He was still in his rough sport clothes, and his bright brown hair was ruffled. He had an air about him of fine, arrogant carelessness that she could worship. He had none of Eddie's punctilio, no sort of nice manners; he had only an indifferent ease, a most complete disregard for any other living soul.

He interrupted without compunction, he made no pretense of listening; he wanted to do all the talking, and he wanted to be listened to with respect. Well, why not? Angelica wished nothing better than to look at him and listen to him forever; she couldn't bear the idea of having to leave his presence.

Every time she looked at him, he was looking at her—at those curious eyes not quite alike. She was bewitched; she

scarcely knew what she was doing. She felt that she shouldn't look at him so much, but that was quite beyond her control. The other people seemed dim and far away, hardly audible. He was filling up the world.

He talked of the war, and his words were glorious. Oh, he was a poet, truly! His talk of blood and battles fired her imagination. Eddie's studious dissertations upon the rights and wrongs of the conflict seemed to her contemptible. A man mustn't go to war because it is his duty, but because he loves it; because he is a hero, like Vincent.

"I'm going!" he said. "I long for it. It's the completion of a man's life. Until he has fought and killed, a man has not lived. That is his manhood, his glory. Think of all Europe rushing, blood-mad, to the Flanders battlefields, all the young and the fine and the strong herded there, to kill or to die! My God! The very pinnacle of life!"

"Or the lowest depth," said Eddie.

Vincent laughed.

"You're no warrior, my dear boy," he said. "Well, we don't expect it of you."

Eddie grew red.

"I dare say I'm as much of a warrior as the next man," he said. "I dare say I'd like it—this fighting and killing; but I don't see anything fine about it. I don't glorify it. I think it's beastly. There are plenty of things that I'd enjoy that I don't by any means admire. This fighting is a filthy relic of our old barbarous days."

"Then so are all our splendid passions, my boy. God keep us barbarous, and men! You chilly, cowering little pen-drivers——"

"That's enough!" said Eddie. "You're talking rot—pure rot!"

He was making a desperate effort to control a furious anger; for the sake of his own dignity he didn't dare to quarrel with Vincent. He knew his brother and his unholy resources too well.

"All those chaps in offices and so on," he continued. "You don't know anything about them. If it comes to the test——"

"Oh, you'll all do your duty, all you little money-grubbers!" said Vincent. "I don't doubt that; but what we need—what the world is sick for, *dying* for—is men who are inspired."

"They might be inspired by something better than drunken enthusiasm," said Eddie.

Vincent laughed again, and looked around the table at his worshipping women; but his glance rested upon Angelica. She caught her breath, stared up at him; and then, for the first time, smiled at him, a smile quite strange to her, trembling and uncertain.

III

Eddie pushed back his chair and got up.

"Miss Kennedy," he said, "I've some more books for you—if you'll come and get them."

"All right!" she answered carelessly.

He hesitated a moment, as if he were about to speak; then he went on up-stairs into his room, leaving the door open so that he could watch the lighted hall. He saw his mother go by, into her own room; then he heard the sound of the piano down-stairs—Polly's familiar touch.

"I suppose she'll stay down there—jabbering!" he said to himself, jealous, hurt beyond measure. "When *he* comes, with his damned swagger, of course she has no further use for—for study and improvement. She'll forget all about coming!"

He couldn't read, himself. He sat facing the door, restless, miserable. There came to his mind so many stories he had read, operas he had heard, with the tragic rivalry of brothers for their theme. And wasn't he the very prototype

of the good brother; the one who is always wronged by the reckless, handsome one—by Vincent? He thrust the thought away. Damned nonsense! No one was in love with any one else in this house!

He recognized an old and most unworthy adversary in this jealousy, something which he had tried for years to combat. It was the most convincing proof of Eddie's greatness of soul that he did so struggle with this envy, and that he did not hate his brother. He had every possible reason for doing so. He had the memory of years and years of injuries and injustices; he had seen this brother always exalted above him, always held up to him as an example of all the social virtues.

"If you'd only try to be more like Vincent!" his mother used to sigh.

Eddie couldn't dance, couldn't sing, couldn't in any sort of way ingratiate himself. He wasn't liked. His goodness itself was perhaps the chief thing against him.

"I never worry about Eddie," Mrs. Russell had often said in his hearing. "He's perfectly safe." And he knew that this was a most unattractive thing to be.

He had never got on with Vincent. There was only two years' difference between them, and Eddie had never been able to make even this apparent. He was smaller, he developed much more slowly, he never could obtain any of the prestige due to him as the elder. Eddie, at nineteen, had been nothing but a somewhat priggish and very shy school-boy, while Vincent, at seventeen, was a young man.

It must not be imagined, however, that Eddie was in any way subservient to his brother. For the most part, they were quite indifferent to each other. They very rarely met; they went to different schools, and Eddie spent his holidays with his mother and Vincent with his father. When their father died, and they were once more under one roof, with their mother, they had separate friends, separate interests.

When anything did bring them together, they fought.

Eddie had more than once been sent rolling in the dirt by his bigger brother; and in spite of the tradition that the normal boy loves the fellow who pummels him most heartily, this didn't breed affection in Eddie's heart. He resented it. He was fiendishly proud and sensitive, and he couldn't forget such outrages.

He had fleeting visions of certain miserable moments—visions of the triumphant and exuberant Vincent, of being taken to see Vincent graduated with honours, to hear him read a valedictory poem he had written, to see him surrounded, overwhelmed with admiration, of watching him win races, play in tennis tournaments and amateur theatricals, of hearing him sing. It seemed to him that he had spent a great part of his youth sitting beside his mother and watching Vincent show off.

There were facets to Vincent's nature which he never regarded or attempted to comprehend. This poetic stuff, for instance. He had heard Vincent recite from his work, but he hadn't seen much in it for admiration. He had simply taken for granted what every one told him, that his brother was a poet. It had never occurred to him that there were grades of poets.

There was something mysterious at which he merely guessed, a side to his brother too amazing and unpleasant to contemplate. Eddie, with his rigid self-discipline, his ceaseless struggle to perfect himself, could in no way comprehend the laxity, the facile debauchery, the equally facile repentance, of an ill-balanced and self-indulgent soul. He had more than once fancied he heard his brother weeping and groaning, sometimes shut in with his mother, sometimes with Polly; but when he actually saw him—big, strong, insolent, forever bragging of his manhood—he couldn't believe it. He couldn't reconcile the idea of hysterical weakness with this conquering creature. He imagined it must be merely some expression of the poetic temperament.

No, this victorious brother was without blemish; he had

become in Eddie's eyes a rival of quite fantastic perfection. He was handsome, he was strong, he was fascinating, he was a poet; he had every accomplishment, every charm. He was not to be withstood.

And, just as he was reflecting, he saw Angelica go by the door, absolutely oblivious of him, without so much as turning her head. He heard her door close; he waited, but he knew it was of no use. She had forgotten him!

IV

Polly, too, was thinking of Vincent. With that pitiful stupidity of women, who can never quite believe themselves without attraction, she had seated herself at the piano and begun to play. She knew he loved music; she hoped to interest him with a curious new piece.

She wasn't in love with him any longer. She didn't even wish him, exactly, to love her; but she was passionately anxious to secure his attention. She had that hunger which all really fine women have—the hunger for being appreciated, recognized. She deluded herself with the idea that after an episode with some worthless little hussy, he couldn't help but contrast such a creature with Polly, and be filled with remorse and respect.

As a matter of fact, he felt nothing in the world but irritation. He did contrast Polly with the girl whom he had left the day before, but it was to the disadvantage of his wife. He saw her to be sallow, weary, faded. She had, he thought, only one good point—she didn't nag; didn't even ask where he'd been.

He came and listened to her music. She saw him sitting close to her, with a look of pleasure on his face, and she put all her art, all her skill, into her playing; but when she glanced up from a difficult passage, he had gone.

She went on playing, but it was mournful, dispirited music; the improvisings of a forlorn heart.

Mrs. Russell alone never gave a thought to Vincent. She had gone to bed very early, as she liked to do, and lay reading a French detective story. Her eyes were bright with interest; she was delighted.

v

Angelica had not turned on the light. She sat by the open window of her room, near which a big lime-tree was rustling in the dark. The grass, the bushes, the clouds, were all moving, and she fancied that moths and bats and other little night creatures fluttered by. The breeze was going past her; she felt none of it on her face. She had an impression of being spectator of a mighty procession, forever passing her window in dim, dark shapes.

She was excited and exultant; in the dark her lips were smiling. She wasn't thinking; she was drifting, lost in an endless reverie, upon the strength and beauty of this man. She was like poor Polly, playing uncounted variations on one sole theme.

"I never felt this way before!" she reflected, with wonder. "I never thought I *could!*"

But then she had never expected to meet a man like this, so entirely the hero of her dreams. With her sad, worldly wisdom, she had expected so little of love or of men. She had expected to be satisfied with some one who would love her; she had never, in her pride, imagined a man whom she could love. This noble and poetic soul was a shock to her, an amazement. Her fancy dwelt upon his splendid figure, his bold face. She smiled again, and then grew suddenly uneasy.

"No!" she said. "I don't like it. I wish I didn't. Him being married, and all!"

For a moment she had an inchoate perception of life going by like that wind outside, only not passing her, but bearing her with it. She knew that this thing could not be stopped.

"Maybe I'd better go home," she thought. "I don't want to get mixed up in anything queer. Maybe I'll go."

But that wasn't genuine; retreat wasn't in her soul. Her vague uneasiness increased; she began thinking of Eddie and his books, and those magnificent women.

"But all of them," she thought, "just went for the man they wanted, I guess, and didn't give a darn for anything else. Maybe that's the best way."

She dallied with the idea of reckless, overwhelming passion, but she could not wholly accept it. There was something humiliating in caring so much for a man.

There was a quiet little knock at the door. Angelica's hand flew to her heart; she didn't stir. There was another knock, and still she didn't answer. Then, fancying she heard a footstep departing, she was seized with an unreasonable panic, and flew across the dark room and stood close beside the door.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"It's I," said the voice she had longed for and dreaded.

"Well, what do *you* want?" she asked, flippantly.

"I thought you'd like to take a walk in the garden," he said.

"Why? It's too late!" she cried.

"Can't we have a little talk?" he asked, plaintively.

"Can't I come in?"

She hesitated.

"I guess—you'd better not. I'll see you in the morning. It's so late now."

"I didn't think you'd care about such things," he said.

She saw that he was disappointed; that he found her tame, cowardly. She unlocked the door and flung it open.

"But what on earth is there to talk about?" she asked, laughing nervously.

And then and there and forever she lost her advantage over Vincent. For that moment she was triumphant, indulgently amused by his eagerness, mistress of the situation and of him, elated by the knowledge that she was beloved and desired; but no sooner had Vincent really entered than he dominated the situation. His big hand closed over hers. He bent over her and whispered in the darkness:

"I couldn't sleep till I'd seen you again!"

"Well!" she said, with the same forced little laugh. "Here I am!"

He seemed in the dark to tower above her; his bigness, the resonance of his deep voice, confused her.

"I couldn't sleep without seeing you," he said again. "I had to know that you were real. After you had gone, I thought I must have dreamed you. You were so lovely, so wonderful, you came upon me so suddenly! You *are* real, aren't you?"

Again she gave a stupid laugh.

"Tell me!" he said. "Are you the girl that I saw at the dinner-table—the houri in yellow that I saw in my mother's room?"

"Yes."

"And only to think!" he said. "I've been looking for you all my life long, all over the world, and I find you here, under my own roof, when I come home! Were you waiting for me?"

"I didn't know there was any you," she said, simply.

"I knew there was you, though! I knew I should find you!" he cried. "Oh, I've hungered for you and thirsted for you! I've been so restless and unsatisfied! I couldn't believe my eyes. I've found you, dear, beloved girl!"

"But you don't know me!" she protested, with an almost painful anxiety. "Perhaps I'm not—as nice—as you think."

"I do know you! I know all your soul. I was born to know you and to comprehend you. You are my sovereign, my most beautiful and adored lady. I am your knight and

your servant forever. I think I could faint with joy for a touch of your dear hand!"

Tears sprang to her eyes, she was so moved by his words, by his ardent and touching voice. She stood motionless, still with her hand in his; but some tremor, some sign which his agile heart at once detected, must have told him that his moment had come. He drew her close to him and clasped her in a strong and tender embrace, her heart beating close to his, while he stroked her soft hair.

"My little one!" he whispered. "My beloved little one! Madonna! Dear, glorious angel!"

His voice broke in a sort of sob, and the hand smoothing her hair trembled. He bent and kissed her cheek, kissed her again; then, suddenly, his embrace tightened, and he pressed his lips against hers with something quite different, something quite devoid of tenderness. She struggled, pushed him roughly away.

"Don't!" she said sharply.

For she wanted it to stop there. She wanted this to be love, this half-sad ecstasy, these stirring, heart-breaking words. She wished to go no further. Perhaps the ghosts of dead mothers for ages back come to beseech young girls, to entreat them in silent voices:

"Oh, do not, my daughter, for the love of God, do not become a woman! Stop here! Let this suffice! For whatever little you may gain, you will lose a hundred times as much. Draw back from this bitter, bitter draught!"

"Kiss me!" he entreated, following her further into the room.

"No!" she said harshly. "Go away! Go out and close the door! Go away, or I'll call!"

He stopped at once.

"I thought you loved me!" he cried.

"I do," she said, with sublime honesty. "Only—I want you to go. Good night!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

I

And here was Angelica, the very next afternoon, sitting once more in her mother's underground kitchen, with the teapot handy beside her on the stove and a familiar blue and white cup and saucer before her; but the kitchen was not as in the old days. Now it was all disorder and dirt, the clock had stopped, the floor was unswept, the bright blackness of the stove was lost in a grayish fuzz. The mistress—or, one might better say, the servant—of this little domain, who had worked so valiantly to preserve its decency, was lying ill in the adjoining bedroom.

Angelica had got a brief note from her that morning at the breakfast-table :

DEAR ANGELICA :

I am taken ill, and do not know how ever I shall manage. If you can spare the time I wish you would come.

YOUR MOTHER.

Angelica had shown this to Eddie, and he had at once ordered the motor for her and given her twenty-five dollars for any urgent expenses.

"Get everything that's necessary," he told her. "If she's very ill, be sure to get a nurse. Don't overtax yourself. And here's my office telephone number; I'll expect to hear from you this afternoon."

Angelica had got a doctor from the neighborhood. He had declared her mother's illness to be a sort of indigestion, and had ordered a cessation of boiled tea, a strengthening diet, a number of medicines, and a week's complete rest; and now Mrs. Kennedy was enjoying the rest.

Angelica had set to work with terrific energy; had gone flying in and out of the flat, using Eddie's money to great advantage. She bought her mother two new night-dresses, a bag of oranges, a drinking-glass—they had had nothing but cups for a long time—and two new saucepans for cooking the food she was to enjoy. Her last purchases had included extension screens for the windows and a wire "fly-swatter," with which she had pursued and deftly crushed every fly in the flat.

After lunch she intended to clean the rooms properly, to scrub, to sweep, to dust, to wash. She rather looked forward to it. Her mother wasn't seriously ill, and she had had the extreme satisfaction of making her happy and comfortable. She had left her lying neat and peaceful in the dark little cell, with her hair brushed and braided and her mind at peace.

Mrs. Kennedy had said that it was better than medicine to see her child again, and it was—above all, to see her child so triumphantly happy. Letters had told her very little, for Angelica was not good at writing, and her brief notes had given her mother plenty of scope for anxiety. She hadn't thought it possible that her child had actually held her own there among the rich people. She wanted to ask innumerable questions, to talk at great length; but Angelica made use of the doctor's recommendation.

"He said for you to be very quiet and not talk much," she stated.

"You talk and I'll listen," said her mother.

"No, that'll excite you," Angelica replied. "You just keep quiet, mommer, till you're better."

She could not talk to Mrs. Kennedy; she felt absolutely obliged to go off alone where she could think of Vincent. All the morning, even through her great anxiety before she had got to her mother, all the while she was working to make her patient comfortable, that delight had glowed in her heart. She had scarcely closed her eyes the night before,

but she was not in any way tired. She was in a sort of continuous rapture; she was filled with energy, vigour, an immeasurable good-will.

She rocked back and forth in the creaking old chair of which her mother was so fond, and drank her tea, as it had been their custom to drink it, black and bitter, with a parsimonious teaspoonful of condensed milk in it. She smiled to think of the contrast between this sort of tea-drinking and that at Buena Vista—the fine and delicate china, the pale amber liquid, served with cream, crystal sugar, thin slices of lemon, all sorts of biscuits and cakes, all the ceremony of the thing. She felt that, after all, there was a tranquil sort of comfort in her present state quite lacking in the other; not realizing that it was the happiness in her heart which gilded all her surroundings.

She pictured Vincent and herself in a place like this, blessed outcasts who had renounced everything, and had only each other. She imagined his coming home to her, weary and pallid; she saw herself welcoming him, smiling, proud, brave through any suffering, her ambitions all renounced, all her hope in him. She fetched a pail of water and a scrubbing-brush and a cake of horrible yellow soap, and while she worked bemused herself with a fancy that this was Vincent's home, and that she was working for him.

Because she so longed to see him, she felt sure that he would come. When the door-bell rang, she sprang up from the floor she was scrubbing, and ran just as she was, disheveled, in her wet apron, to let him in.

She met the troubled regard of Eddie.

"How is your mother?" he inquired, staring and staring at this joyous, untidy creature.

"Better," said Angelica.

She was friendly, very well-disposed toward Eddie, and yet, at this moment, irritated by him because he wasn't Vincent. Really she didn't want to see him. She remained holding the door half open, and hoping that he would go,

but he stood there for some time, frowning a little and biting his little yellow mustache in silence.

"Do you mind if I come in?" he asked at last.

"No, of course not! Come on in, if you want; only mommer's in bed——"

"I wanted to see you alone," he said, his frown deepening to a scowl. "May I?"

Her heart sank. It was surely something about Vincent—a reproof, an accusation, perhaps dismissal. She led the way into the tiny parlour, black as a dungeon, and with barred windows, too; took off her apron and threw it, a sodden bundle, out into the hall. Then she sat down defiantly before him.

"Well?" she demanded.

Eddie waited for a moment.

"I've been thinking," he said at last. "About you. A lot. Especially last night. If you've got time to spare, and if you'll listen——"

"Go ahead! I'm listening."

She was still defiant, because she expected a rebuke, and she was well aware that there was quite enough cause in her conduct to merit severe reproofs. He was so serious, so disturbed, that she believed him to be disappointed in her, and she resented that.

"Well?" she said again.

"It's this," he said. "I—I wish I could make you believe that I'm not selfish in this. I wish I had some way of making you believe that I'm really thinking of *you*, first of all. You seem so—solitary, so—unprotected. Of course, I know you're very self-reliant, and all that, but still, you're only a young girl, after all."

"I can take care of myself," she said sullenly. "I suppose you mean you don't like the way I've been acting. Well, I——"

"No!" he cried impatiently. "What nonsense! No! What I mean is—I think you'd better marry me."

"Oh, Gawd!" cried Angelica, astounded.

Eddie's face grew scarlet.

"Why shouldn't you?" he said.

"But——"

"I've—I can offer you—I have a good income," he went on, angry and embarrassed. "I own Buena Vista, with a small mortgage on it. I have something invested, and I'm earning plenty. I'm doing well. I'll be a rich man before long."

"Yes, I know; but——"

"And—I think I'd make a good husband. I admire you so much—I can't tell you how much! I think you're—wonderful. You haven't a penny, you haven't any family, any position——"

"Now, look here!" she interrupted, threateningly.

He hastened to repair his lack of tact.

"I'm only mentioning that to show you that I think that you—just yourself—are worth more than any other woman on earth. It seems to me you have all the qualities I've always admired—pride, and spirit, and ambition, and strength—and then you're so beautiful. I—really, Angelica, if you would marry me, I could do *anything*. I'm only twenty-nine, you know."

"Oh, I thought you were much older!" said Angelica, glad of any distraction from this awful topic.

To her amazement, Eddie sprang to his feet and looked down at her, quite pale with anger.

"No doubt!" he cried. "No doubt you looked on me as a dull, tiresome, middle-aged man. You're like all women—you *must* have a handsome man—any fool with a handsome face, who'll make you fine speeches! If I'd go down on my knees and rant and rave like a damned actor—but I won't! I'm not that sort. I tell you, in a straightforward way, that I—I ask you to marry me. I'm—I've got nothing to be ashamed of—nothing! One or two little things in

the past—but nothing serious. I mean, no one can reproach me. I've never harmed any one."

"Oh, I know it!" she cried. "It's not that. I know you're good—too good for me. I think an awful lot of you, Mr. Eddie. Only——"

"Only what?"

"I couldn't!"

"Now, see here, Angelica, I haven't much time. I've come away in the very middle of my office hours to—settle this. I can't work, I can't do anything until this is off my mind. It's—*don't* be unreasonable, please, Angelica!"

"I'm not, Mr. Eddie; but—I just can't!"

"Do you mean," he said, "that I'm—distasteful to you?"

That was his weak point, his sorest spot, this sense of his own unattractiveness, his unpopularity. He had labored too long under disadvantages too crushing; he couldn't acquire the self-respect to which his qualities entitled him. He had never been loved, not even by his own mother, and he could not destroy a conviction, persisting from childhood, that he was in some mysterious way unlovable and repulsive.

He turned away abruptly.

"Very well!" he said. "I understand. I'll go. Good-by!"

"No! Don't! It's not that. You're *not* distasteful!" she cried. "Honestly, you're not—not a bit! I think an awful lot of you. I think you're—grand. I do, really; but I'm just not in love with you. I can't help it. It isn't that you're not handsome, or anything like that."

She was moved by his wretched, pallid face. She wanted very much to reassure him as to his desirability and attractiveness. She wanted him to know of her admiration and her great good-will; but she knew no way of saying all this. She caught his hand and squeezed it; and when he turned, she looked up at him with those wonderful black eyes, troubled, filled with tears.

"But can't we keep on being good friends?" she asked.

He forced himself to smile down at her in his old kindly way—or as nearly that as his drawn face would allow.

“I’ll try,” he said. “Good day!”

II

Mrs. Kennedy wished to have all this explained to her.

“Who was it, Angie?” she asked.

“It was Mr. Eddie—him that owns the house,” said Angelica.

“What did he want?”

“Oh, nothing!”

“Angie, tell your mother, deary. What made you cry?”

“I don’t know. I was nervous, I guess.”

Her mother sighed.

“If you’ve made up your mind not to tell me— You know your own business best, I dare say; only, Angelica, I hope there’s nothing wrong about it—nothing that’s what it shouldn’t be?”

“No! If you really want to know, he wants to marry me.”

She couldn’t conceal a sort of pride. After all, it *was* something!

Her mother was not garrulous, but this she couldn’t stop talking of; she couldn’t have enough of Eddie, no detail was too trivial. She wanted to have a complete description of his person and of his life.

But Angelica’s reception of his proposal she didn’t mention. She saw that there was something a bit strained in that quarter, something which talking might make worse, so she held her tongue, confident that it would end right enough. A girl’s whim! She knew her daughter; Angelica was far too sensible and shrewd not to take advantage of such an opportunity. She permitted herself to dream of a future for her child glorious beyond all her former hopes.

For herself she expected nothing. She knew—none better—what there is of gratitude in this world. She trusted her child, knew that she would never forget or neglect her, but she knew also that Angelica was likely to rise where she never could follow. There would be a pension, no doubt, but no real share in any future grandeur for Mrs. Kennedy, scrubwoman, janitress, and martyr.

Her dreaming was disturbed, however, and her happiness turned to uneasiness by the arrival of a second man that night. She heard the bell ring and her daughter hasten to the door, and then come back again.

“Mommer, do you mind if I go out for a little while?” she asked.

“Who with, Angie?”

“A feller,” said Angelica. “I’ll be back inside of an hour, sure. Will you be all right?”

“What fellow?”

“A new beau,” Angelica told her, laughing. “By-by, mommer! Back soon!”

So joyous, so excited! It didn’t look well for Eddie.

“Now what in the world is that child up to?” Mrs. Kennedy thought.

In the meantime Angelica had reached the street with Vincent, and they stood on the corner, irresolute. It was a sultry night; the street was swarming with wretched and vicious life, evil smells, a pandemonium of noise. Angelica, however, might have been standing in the golden streets of paradise, or in the desolation of hell, for all she cared. She didn’t notice, she didn’t really know, where she was.

Ever since she had opened the door and seen Vincent standing outside, she had been quite beside herself. She waited on that malodorous corner, looking up into his face with hungry eyes, waiting for his words, for the sound of his voice. So much had she thought about that enchanted love scene in the dark, so long had she dwelt upon Vincent’s words, his appearance, that in this brief interlude she had

been able to accomplish that amazing and essential transformation of lovers—she had changed the real man into the man she wished him to be.

She was dazed, stupid with the splendour of her own creation, of the god whom she had made to worship. She was almost afraid of him. After all her preposterously exaggerated day-dreams, it was necessary that she should see in him a marvel, and of course she did see a marvel.

He wore a dark suit that fitted closely to his shoulders, and moulded for the delighted eye his splendid figure, his perfectly proportioned height. He was powerful and at the same time graceful, and he carried himself regally. In his rôle of poet, he wore a white shirt with a low, open collar and a soft black tie, and he went with his hat in his hand, the better to show his keen, vigorous profile, his fine head with its rough, bright hair. Angelica felt that she would never grow tired of looking at him, and yet in less than five minutes she grew restless because he didn't look at her.

At last he did, and smiled.

"Well?" he said. "What shall we do, eh?"

"Whatever you like."

"God forbid!"

"Why?" she demanded impudently. "What *would* you like?"

"I'd like to kiss you, for one thing; but I won't. Don't be provoking, naughty Angelica—I won't make love to you!"

His tone was light and careless, and the smile he gave her she neither understood nor liked. She was puzzled and hurt. What made him so different? What was the matter?

"Suppose we walk?" he suggested. "This isn't a very appetizing corner to stand on. How is your mother?"

"Better," said Angelica in a surly tone.

"And you?"

"All right."

"I don't know who else there is in your household, but I hope they're all quite well. Brothers and sisters——"

"Don't be silly!" she said roughly.

"Angelica," he replied, "I'm not silly. I'm only trying to be decent. You're very young, very inexperienced. It's hard to talk to you. I hoped you'd understand without an explanation, but I don't believe now that you can."

She could have wept with chagrin and utter bewilderment. She saw that she was being very stupid, and that she was disappointing her idol in some way, but she couldn't in the least comprehend how.

"You see," he went on, with an air of extreme patience and gentleness, "all that—last night—it was very wrong. I blame myself severely. My ideas about such things aren't the usual sort, by any means. I don't parade it, but I'm a deeply religious man; and when I find myself giving way to temptation as I did last night, I'm ashamed."

They went along in silence, down Seventh Avenue, to the entrance of the park at One Hundred and Tenth Street. They entered here, and proceeded, at the easy pace he had set, side by side, both looking ahead. All about them in the warm dark were lovers, sitting close together on the benches, walking hand in hand. There was a very atmosphere of love. And Angelica must go on beside this man, who didn't even turn his head to look at her, who had nothing to say to her. He only quoted some poetry which she neither liked nor understood, for it had nothing to do with love; it was about the foreign people in the city and the hot weather.

She tried to lean upon her pride. Very well, if *he* didn't mind wasting this precious and beautiful hour together, then neither would she; but she couldn't restrain a hoarse little sob that flew suddenly into her throat.

Vincent stopped.

"Now, my dear child!" he remonstrated. "Don't! You make it so hard for me. It's not kind."

She tried to stop weeping, but couldn't at once. He laid a hand on her shoulder and gently patted her.

"You mustn't take it like this, my dear; or else I shan't be strong enough. Do you know why I came to-night?"

"I suppose—you wanted to see me."

"No, I didn't. It's only pain for me to see you. I can't have you. I mustn't even think of you. I've got to give you up. I've got to stop loving you."

"Can you?" she asked, with quivering lips.

"I must. I came to tell you so. You must forget all I said last night. I shouldn't be fit to live if I were to harm you. Angelica, what do you think I am? Do you think I *could* harm you? Do you think it's in me to do so brutal a thing, Angelica?"

She was effectually checked, her ardour destroyed. Nettled by his assumption that only his nobility saved her, her pride came to the aid. He needn't talk of giving her up when he hadn't got her!

And, ignorant as Angelica was, a novice in love, she was able to perceive a certain falseness in his attitude. This was not the renunciation of a man who loved her better than himself. It was something different, which she didn't understand, and which displeased her.

She had such a feminine longing to be captured and compromised that she couldn't even imagine the motive which just then ruled Vincent—that powerful instinct of the male to escape entanglements; but her fresh and fervent spirit was able by instinct to perceive his staleness. Mystery as he was to her, she nevertheless felt, with perfect justness, that at that moment he cared nothing at all for her.

"Let's turn back!" she said. "I told mommer I wouldn't be gone long."

He made no objection. He took her back to her own door and stood hat in hand to wish her a good night.

"Angelica," he said, "I think you will thank me some day."

She didn't reply, only turned and left him, and went into the flat.

Her mother was asleep, and everything was quiet. She sat down in the dark kitchen near the barred window, where a beam of light from a flat overhead, across the court, fell upon her.

"Well!" she said. "*That's* over, I guess!"

An awful sense of frustration swept over her. That all this should stop before it had fairly begun; that this beautiful love should be stamped out—intolerable! It was not in her nature to submit; there was no resignation in her. She could not bear to be thwarted here, at the threshold of her life, at the very beginning of the adventure to which she had always looked forward.

She cried fiercely to God that she didn't love this man, that he wasn't the one for whom she had longed. She *wouldn't weep!* If she could, she would have torn out of her body that treacherous heart which so belied her pride.

"All right, my lad!" she said. "All right! You won't find it very hard to give *me* up!"

She lighted the gas and sauntered about the kitchen, eating whatever she saw—bread and biscuits, with a little cold tea that was in the teapot. She even whistled softly to herself.

Mrs. Kennedy waked up, and Angelica went in to see what her mother wanted. She strictly discouraged conversation, however, and questions.

"Don't talk, mommer. It's too late. Go to sleep now. I'm coming to bed myself right away. I'll put out the light and get undressed in the dark, so you can get to sleep."

Which she did. Her mother heard her moving adroitly about, heard her brushing her hair, and, at last, the wild shriek of a spring cot, bought second-hand the day before.

For half an hour Angelica lay quite still; then suddenly she sat up.

"*You!*" she whispered, with a sob. "*You!* You go to hell! I don't care!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

I

Angelica was surprised at getting a letter the next morning, for she never got letters. The writing was necessarily unfamiliar, as there was none that would not have been. She opened it.

"Angelica, beloved girl!" it began. "I can't do it!"

"Why, my Gawd!" she whispered. "It's from *him!*"

I can't give you up! I tried—God knows I did, but I can't! I can't think of consequences, of honour, of anything but this heavenly madness that is destroying me. Even if I lose my soul, even if it brings ruin and misery upon you whom I worship, I must have you, Angelica! Oh, come back to me! Come back to me! The farce is over. I have played my rôle of prudent, honourable man of the world. Here I am now, without reserve, without the smallest shred of worldly wisdom, without conscience, without civilization; nothing, my Angelica, but a man!

Nothing but your lover,
VINCENT.

She was wild with joy. She set to work with terrific energy, the letter crushed inside her blouse. She insisted upon finishing the ironing which Mrs. Kennedy had tried to do for a tenant before she became ill. She stood over the ironing-board singing in her rather husky voice.

Nothing but a misunderstanding, after all! He did love her, he had only tried to do what was right. She felt a profound pity for him, her poor poet, who had done his very best to protect her, until love overwhelmed him.

"You *bet* I'll go back to him!" she said to herself.

Her mother was alarmed. She saw—who could help it?—the exaltation of her child, and she wished to know the cause. Poor woman! She feared joy with all her soul.

"Who was that other man you went out with last night, Angie?" she asked.

"Oh! The brother of the other feller."

Her mother reflected.

"You seem to like him better," she said at last.

"Yes, I do."

"Is he nice?"

"Yes, he is."

"But you're not——?"

"I don't know, mommer!" she answered, laughing.

"Deary! I wish you'd *tell* me!"

"There's nothing to tell."

"But, my deary, don't be foolish. Don't be hasty! Try to find out if he's—a good man, before you let yourself think about him. *Is* he a good man, Angie?"

"He's a good-looking one, anyway," Angelica answered flippantly. "Now, mommer dear, please don't worry about *me*. I'm not a fool!"

"But you're young, Angie, and you're very hasty. I do worry about you. You never tell me anything. You won't listen to me."

Angelica, with that letter next her heart, was patient.

"I do listen to you, mommer. Now, do you want a glass of milk?"

She was patient, because she was indifferent, because for the first time in her life she didn't care about her mother, didn't care what Mrs. Kennedy thought or how she felt. She wanted, in fact, to get away from her, to be quite free and not bothered by questions.

"Shall I go back to him now?" she thought. "This instant? Just like I am?"

But that, though splendid, wouldn't do, and couldn't be arranged; so she sat down to write him a letter. It took her no more than a minute to finish it, for this was all that she wrote:

I will come back to you. I love you, too.

Your
ANGELICA.

The telephone rang—that hateful telephone in the dark outer hall, under the stairs. This was one of the “modern conveniences” of the apartment-house, and it was her mother’s duty to attend it, and by screaming, by ringing the downstairs bells, or, when they were broken, by toiling up the stairs, to apprise the tenant whom it summoned. They both hated the thing. When it rang, they would sigh, “Oh, that telephone!” and go wearily to serve it.

It was a surprise and a great relief to hear Eddie’s voice on the telephone, for Angelica had been half afraid that the etiquette prevailing among rich people would prevent any further communication. She wasn’t even sure as to whether or not she was expected to go back to Buena Vista. But Eddie wasn’t that sort. His voice was just as it had always been—official, but quite kindly.

“Hello!” he said. “How’s your mother?”

“Much better.”

“That’s good! Then have you any idea when you’ll come back to us, Angelica?”

“In a week. Next Saturday, the doctor says.”

“Good! I’ll call for you next Saturday afternoon, when I leave the office. And I say, Angelica, don’t you want Courtland to bring you some of the things you left at our place?”

“I *would* like a few of them,” she answered, gratefully.

And the busy, harassed Eddie, sitting in his office, with impatient men waiting to see him, with his stenographer pen in hand beside him, with a telegraph-boy behind him who required a reply, in the midst of the rattle of typewriters, the ringing of telephone-bells, the clicking of the ticker, hoarse, excited voices, all this frenzied life which he had caused to exist and directed and sustained—he took time to write down

at Angelica's dictation a list of things she had left behind her in his house.

It touched him, that list, it was so obviously the list of a poor person—things that he, or any one he knew, would have bought duplicates of without a second thought; things one would hardly bother to pack. He got them together himself when he reached home that evening—a tooth-brush, a cake of perfumed soap, a half-empty box of cheap writing-paper, hairpins, a nail-brush.

Courtland brought them that evening, much against his will. Who was she to have her wretched little belongings sent down to her in a motor-car? He was obliged to assert himself, to proclaim his independence and his superiority. He stood outside the door with his finger on the bell so that it rang in one long, maddening clamour, and he kicked at the door. He made an outrageous noise.

Angelica came flying down the hall in a fury, and flung open the door.

"What do you mean?" she cried. "Where do you think you are, anyway?"

Courtland stared at her for a minute. Then, making an imaginary lorgnette of his thumb and forefinger, he peered through it, bending forward from the waist in a preposterous and unseemly attitude.

"Aeoh!" he exclaimed, in a simpering voice. "I beg your pawdon, I'm suah! I forgot myself, really, don'tcher know! If you will kindly permit me to enter this mansion, I will deliver to you this package of jools sent by the dook!"

"Give it to me and shut your mouth," said Angelica.

"What's all this?" called Mrs. Kennedy from her bed. "Who is it, Angie?"

"Only the chauffeur. He brought some of my things," her daughter answered in a contemptuous tone.

There was something about her child's words and tone that jarred upon Mrs. Kennedy. She came out of the bed-

room in her new flannel wrapper, and addressed Courtland with ceremonious politeness.

"I'm sure we're very much obliged to you," she said. "Won't you step in? Maybe you'd take a cup of tea, and rest a few minutes?"

"Rest!" said Angelica. "He never does anything else!"

Courtland ignored her.

"I don't care if I do," he said to Mrs. Kennedy, and followed her into the kitchen, where he sat down heavily on the step-ladder chair. "I'm as tired as a dawg," he said, with his invariable air of grievance. "It's enough to make you sick—driving that woman all over the country. No more consideration, she's got, than a—than a dawg!"

"Well," said Mrs. Kennedy, "I suppose that's what you're paid for."

"I know it!" he agreed, plaintively. "That's all right; but then what does she want to be telling me I'm too good to be a chauffeur for? She says there's lots of fellows in college hasn't got my brains. And this golf! There she's got me the bag of clubs that cost Gawd knows what, and she just started showing me the way to use them. She said I was doing fine, and then, all of a sudden, she dropped it, and never said another word about it. I waited. After a while I began putting the bag of clubs in the car, to remind her. No, not a word! So I says to her to-day, 'What about this here golf?' And she says, with that grin of hers, 'Oh, I hawdly think it's worth while going on. I'm afraid it was a mistake'—and tells me I can sell the clubs!"

"What of it?" inquired Mrs. Kennedy. "They're no good to you. I can't see any sense in your learning to play golf. I can't see what you have to complain of."

"Oh, it's the way them rich people pick you up and then drop you that makes me sick! Who is *she*, anyway? An old——"

"You shouldn't say that!" said Mrs. Kennedy, severely.

She was well enough used to bad language not to be shocked, but she was displeased.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Angelica, "after all she's done for you."

"I don't want her to do nothing for me. I want her to let me alone. Listen here—you wouldn't stand up for her if you knew the way she talks about you. I had the two of them out the other day, and they were fighting about you all the time. *She* said you was no good, and she guessed you'd stole things off her; but Mrs. G., she says no, you're all right. Then *she* says you'd make trouble in the house, and Mrs. G. says, 'Well, ain't there enough trouble there anyway? What do we care if we get a little more? I want her back,' she says. 'All right,' says the old lady, 'have her, if you want her, but don't kick if you find your hus——'"

Angelica had grown scarlet.

"My Gawd, what a lot you talk!" she said. "You better be starting home."

He eyed her with resentment.

"I'll go!" he said. "Don't you worry!"

After Courtland had gone, Mrs. Kennedy attempted to reprove her daughter for her bad manners, but Angelica insisted autocratically that she must go to bed at once.

"You shouldn't get up at all," she told her mother.

"The doctor said it wouldn't hurt me—just around the flat."

"Not at night! You'd ought to know better. You ought to be asleep by this time. Now, listen here, mommer!" she added firmly, as she saw signs of rebellion. "If you don't do what I say, I'm not going to stay and take care of you. The doctor said *rest*. Well, this isn't rest. You got to go to bed this instant!"

So did she rid herself of the necessity for talking, for listening, for recognizing the external world. She was irritable at the very least disturbance; her joy had gone, and left a bitter impatience. Five days before she could go back to

that enchanted house where Vincent lived, to be again under the same roof, sitting at the same table! Five days lost out of life, out of her best years!

She was a little surprised and rather pleased at her own lack of morality. She really didn't care a bit, didn't feel in the least shocked or distressed, at loving a married man; nor did she hesitate for an instant at the prospect of going off with him. She believed that was what he meant; very well, she was ready!

She would leave her poor little mother desolate, she would humiliate and affront the kindly Polly, she would leave Eddie overwhelmed by disgrace and grief, and still she didn't care. She was deceiving her mother, deceiving Polly, shamefully deceiving Eddie, and she didn't care. On the contrary, she was rather proud of it. She felt that such insolent wickedness had in it more than a little magnificence of the sort possessed by the magnificent women of the past.

Oh, the world was well lost for Vincent, her poet lover! She read his letter again and cried over it—she who had shed so few tears in her life.

II

But in spite of all her hardihood, her pride in her love, she couldn't help feeling a great dread of Eddie. She didn't like to face him. She had a silly idea that by merely looking at her he might know all that her heart contained; and although he so much admired magnificence, she had no delusion as to his admiring this!

She got ready on Saturday afternoon in a state of great nervousness that subdued even her eagerness to be with Vincent again. She hadn't seen either of the brothers for the past five days; Eddie had telephoned every day, but there had been no word at all from Vincent.

That didn't trouble her, however. She felt that she and

Vincent understood each other absolutely, no matter how long or how far apart they were. Just as she thought of him, he thought of her, longed for her. Her only trouble was this dread; if only it were not Eddie who were taking her to him! It seemed to cast a shadow upon the boldness and beauty of their love to dupe a creature so blameless and so generous as Eddie.

He was late. It had grown dark, and the lamp in the parlour was lighted, and she and her mother sat in there, talking—a word now and then, and long, long silences. They had nothing to say to each other. Angelica's heart had flown forward to meet her lover, while her mother's brain struggled wearily with the problems of the minute, of the next week, of some one's ironing, some one else's scrubbing, of whether she were going to earn enough to keep herself from getting ill again. They were effectually separated now.

Came a brisk ring at the bell, and Mrs. Kennedy went to open the door.

"Come in, sir!" Angelica heard her say.

"Mrs. Kennedy?" replied Eddie's voice. "I hope you're better?"

"Thank you, sir, I'm quite well again. Won't you step in?"

Angelica greeted him with an uncertain smile; she didn't know what his attitude would be. But he was certainly not vexed, or cold, or suspicious; he was simply excited, not himself.

"Well!" he said. "I've done it!"

"Done what?" she asked.

"I've enlisted."

"You're going to the war?"

"Yes."

"But I thought you didn't approve of it. You said it was beastly, and everything."

"Yes, I do think so; but——"

He hesitated, frowning. He didn't know how to explain;

didn't, as a matter of fact, honestly wish to explain. His motive in going was purely selfish; he hoped in battle to make more of a man of himself, to glorify himself. It was the same impulse which sent him to historical books and to tremendous days of work—his earnest, priggish, sublime desire to perfect himself. He believed—like how many others!—that he would come back from the war a new man.

"I think I ought to go," he said, and was immediately ashamed of this self-righteous phrase.

Angelica, to tell the truth, was not much impressed by the war. It never stirred or moved her much at any time. She felt neither belligerent nor pacifist. She simply took it for granted. She was one of those peasant natures for whom it is quite impossible to feel either love or hate in the abstract. She could have hated with royal hatred a German who molested her, but she had no ill-will toward a German who invaded Belgium. And as for fine phrases about it, her rough and vigorous mind rejected them all. Ought to go? Why ought he to go? Just what did he expect to accomplish?

However, she didn't say this, any more than she allowed the least hint of her great relief to show. That was the first thought that crossed her mind—how much better it would be if Eddie were away!

Mrs. Kennedy shook her head.

"It's too bad!" she said. "Think of your poor mother!"

Eddie could find nothing to say to that.

"Suppose you should be killed?" Mrs. Kennedy went on, with a sort of severity, as if she were speaking to a person who persistently sat in a draft.

"It wouldn't matter very much," said Eddie, with a faint smile. "Good night, Mrs. Kennedy! Be sure to take care of yourself!"

Angelica followed him out and climbed into the car beside him. Those last words of his had hurt her, had brought to her mind the thought of his loneliness, and memories of his

kindnesses and of his little, oddly touching traits. She was pursued by a great remorse and a great regret.

"I'm *sorry* you're going!" she said, with a break in her voice.

"I know you are; but don't be sentimental about it. I couldn't stand that. Be cheerful!"

"I'm not sentimental," she said, forcing her voice to be steady. "Only—I think a lot of you. Every one 'll miss you."

"No!" replied Eddie. "No one will miss me, except perhaps you. No one else at all, Angelica."

They were spinning along dark country roads now, and he could not see her stealthy tears. She was thinking—wasn't she perhaps a fool to let him go?"

"Oh, I am sorry!" she said again. "I wish I could have——"

"I know!" he said. "You can't help it. I—don't blame you. I'm not lovable."

"You are!"

"No, I'm not. There's nothing about me that a girl like you could fall in love with. I know that with women that's the chief thing—love; but men are made of coarser stuff. Even if you didn't love me, Angelica, I—I wish you would marry me. I'm not boasting, but I could do a great deal for you. If you could only hear how other men speak of me! I'm doing bigger things in business—all the time. I—I know I seem like a fool. Maybe I am, at home; but I'm not a fool in finance. I'll be one of the richest men in the country some day, Angelica."

"I never thought you were a fool. Indeed, I think you're wonderful. I think you're—I'm sure you'll do whatever you set out to do."

"But wouldn't you like to help me? Things are so muddled and wasteful at home now. If I had a wife like you, Angelica, to manage there for me, while I'm away! I *need* you so much!"

“Oh, deary!” she cried. “Please don’t! I’m so sorry, but I just can’t!”

He drove silently for a long time, until the lights of that home of his—named with such Eddie-like pomposity—came into view. Then he said, quite serenely and kindly :

“I’ll be your friend, anyway, Angelica—always!”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I

Angelica saw no one that night; but when she passed by the library, the door was half open and she heard voices in there—an unusual thing for that unsociable family.

Eddie went with her to the door of her room and wished her a good night, but she did not have one. She slept fitfully, and she had heart-breaking dreams. She felt confused and unhappy, awake or asleep. She couldn't shake off that dull remorse, or a certain sense of great loss which haunted her.

She got up early, hoping that she might find Vincent and talk to him, and arrange with him to put an end to this wretched, intolerable situation. She couldn't go on like this, in Eddie's house, meeting him every day. She felt sure that Vincent must feel this as she did, or perhaps still more bitterly. She looked forward to it as an exquisite relief, to pour out her heart to him, sure of his apprehension; sure, too, that he would admire her fine feeling.

She was surprised, when she reached the breakfast-room, to see them all at the table together—Polly and Mrs. Russell up and dressed hours before their usual time; the doctor serious; Vincent in a neat dark suit and a new air of decorum. He glanced up as Angelica entered, and smiled, casually, the meaningless smile of his mother; then his eyes turned away. It wasn't a ruse; he wasn't pretending to be indifferent; she could see that he really *was* so.

Polly made polite inquiries about Angelica's mother, and then they had finished with her, and returned to their own absorbing preoccupation—the war.

In this one short week they had plunged into the war with

fervour, led by Vincent. They cared for nothing else. Mrs. Russell had organized a tennis tournament for Stricken Belgium; her specialty was getting up entertainments and recounting atrocities of a certain sort. Ordinarily there were all sorts of fascinating subjects which one couldn't discuss, all sorts of the most interesting semi-medical details which were unhappily tabu; but now, provided one told of it as done by a German, one might say anything. Nothing was too degenerate, too shocking.

Polly spent much of her time in the Red Cross work-rooms, rolling bandages. She could do this with all her heart, without betraying a secret pity she felt for Germany. She had lived there so long, and had been so happy in her student days. She was convinced that the Germans were very wicked, and that it was necessary to conquer them, but all the same she was sorry for them; and she persisted in her firm hope that her own country would never enter the war.

"Yes," she said, "I do sympathize with the Allies. I hope they'll win. I'm glad and willing to help them; but I'd rather see them lose than to see any of our own boys killed!"

She kept to herself the horror she felt at the idea of some nice American boy killing one of those magnificent, insolent German officers she had always so admired.

Moreover, she didn't like the English. She had all the resentment, all the prejudices, of her little Ohio town against that lordly race. It wasn't Vincent's fantastic Irish hate; it wasn't really hate at all, simply a stubborn dislike. She found a compromise, as he did, by a preposterous worship of all things French. They were apparently fighting the war alone against overwhelming numbers of Germans, somewhat hindered by a small and very stupid British army.

Vincent gave a sort of inspired dissertation upon the French, which deeply moved his family but failed to move Angelica. She was too stunned by this change of atmosphere. She was of no significance now; she wasn't useful, she wasn't interesting. No one—not even Vincent—gave

her another glance; and Eddie, her steadfast friend, wasn't there.

But the greatest blow of all was Vincent's attitude toward Polly, his friendly deference, their air of complete harmony. She watched them, saw them exchange smiles and glances, listened to their familiar talk.

He left directly the meal was finished, and Polly went upstairs to put on her hat.

"I'm going to work all morning," she said. "You can come with me and roll bandages, or, if you'd rather, you can stay at home and trim that hat for me."

"I'll stay home," said Angelica.

But Polly lingered, inexcusably, to talk about Vincent—how Vincent and she went to this meeting, how Vincent and she said this, how Vincent and she thought that. They both knew that this was nothing more or less than crowing. Polly had vanquished Angelica. She had got him back!

Of course she had no actual information as to his philandering with her companion, but she had observed, she had put two and two together. She had never suspected actual wrongdoing; she didn't imagine, somehow, that there was anything in Angelica's conduct to blame. She simply thought that Vincent had too much admired this lovely young thing, and that Angelica had had her head turned by the flattery of his attention. She felt justified in pressing her advantage.

Angelica endured it stoically. She wouldn't show even any interest. She listened to this talk of Vincent with rude inattention, and even went so far as to yawn.

"He is wonderful," said Polly. "He's organized a sort of club—the Friends of France—men that can't go themselves, but pledge themselves to get recruits. He says the war has stirred his faith. I'm very glad. He's doing wonderful work!"

"Why don't he enlist, like Mr. Eddie?"

"My dear, he'd never serve under the British flag. Eddie's in the Canadian service. Vincent's Irish, you see."

"Well, isn't Mr. Eddie the same as he?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so; but he's a different sort of Irishman."

"Well, why don't he serve under the French flag, then, if he's so fond of it?"

"He can do more good as he is. There are plenty of men who can fight, but there are very few who have Vincent's wonderful eloquence."

"He said he was crazy to go," said Angelica; "but I notice he doesn't."

"He's married, too, you must remember," said Polly. "That makes a difference. Married men aren't supposed to go till the very last."

Their eyes met.

"Take him!" said Angelica's glance. "*I don't care!*" But after Polly had gone, she took out Vincent's letter and read it again. She couldn't understand it! She felt bruised, and weary, and sick at heart, and baffled. A letter like that, entreating her to come back to him, and, when she came, to find him on the best of terms with his wife and quite indifferent to her!

"But perhaps later, when we're alone," she thought, "he'll say something."

But all that day, and that evening, not a word, and the next day, too, until it grew plain to her that he didn't intend to see her alone, that he was avoiding her.

So the next morning she wrote a note and slipped it under his door:

I want to see you.

He made no sort of answer; he went on all day as if she didn't exist; he wouldn't even meet her eye. When he wasn't going out in the motor to make speeches for the Friends of France, he was sitting in Polly's room, telling her what he

had said at the last meeting and what he was going to say at the next one.

But Angelica was not to be disposed of so simply. She made up her mind that he would have to speak, he would have to tell her outright that he didn't love her.

"He won't find it hard to get rid of me!" she thought, bitterly. "But he's got to *say*. I want to understand. What does he write me a letter like that for, and then be this way?"

She had a feeble little hope that perhaps it was only his feeling of duty that kept him from her, that he loved her and didn't dare to see her. She felt that if he would just say that he loved her, but that they must give up all thought of each other, she would be satisfied. She could go on living, if she had that knowledge. *Something*, however, he must say.

On the third evening she lay in wait for him. Polly and Mrs. Russell had gone to bed, and he hadn't returned yet from a lecture he was giving in the village; so she turned out the light in her room and sat in the dark, with the door open, waiting.

It was a melancholy October' night. The leaves from the linden rustled against her window as they were blown from the branches, and a constant, monotonous, low wind blew, with a sound like rain. She sat as still as a spider in a web, grim, unhappy, filled with apprehension.

In the course of time he came in. She saw him hurry down the hall in his wet ulster and cap, and go into his own room. She was after him before he had time to close the door.

"I want to speak to you!" she said. "Why didn't you let me? Don't you want to see me?"

"No," he said. "No, Angelica, I don't." He hadn't even removed his cap. He put his hand on the knob of the door. "You shouldn't have come here," he said. "Some one might see you."

"I don't care! I want to know. What's the matter? What's happened?"

"I hoped," he said quietly, "that you'd let it drop without an explanation which is bound to be painful for both of us."

"I want to know where I stand. I want you to *say*."

"Sit down," he said. "I suppose we'll have to have it out."

She did sit down, and waited while he took off his wet things, brushed his hair, and put on a smoking-jacket. She was interested by his room; for a few moments it distracted her unhappy heart. It was a curious room splendidly furnished in black and gold enamel. There was a sort of Chinese idea about it, shockingly adulterated by European luxury; long mirrors, armchairs upholstered in purple, great bookcases, a black and gray velvet rug on the polished floor, a marvelous lacquer screen concealing the bed, a little stand on which was a tea-set of pale gray porcelain with an odd black design. There were pictures on the wall—shocking, startling things, obscene subjects in brilliant colours; and in the corner a great ebony crucifix.

This exotic and voluptuous setting dismayed her. It proclaimed a Vincent of whom she knew nothing, and whom she could never comprehend. How in Heaven's name was she to understand the poetic side of the man, she so unpoetic, so crude? A man with tea-sets and crucifixes and such pictures!

He sat down opposite to her in a low, cushioned chair, his head bent, his hands clasped between his knees. Her foolish eyes could see, with tears, that rough, bright hair, those fine, strong hands.

"Angelica," he began, not looking at her, "I've been a coward with you. I've shirked this, because it is so intolerably hard to do."

She waited in anguish, with no idea of what she was to hear.

"You see, Angelica, the war has opened my eyes. I was—just going on, lost in your beauty and loveliness, not thinking—drifting, drifting to hell, and taking you with me. And then came this thing, this deafening, colossal call to self-sac-

rifice, this monstrous revelation of the glory and holiness of duty. I'm not callous. I couldn't help but heed it. I couldn't go on in my old gross self-indulgence. Angelica!" he said, looking up and meeting her eyes. "This war has brought me back to God!"

"But," she faltered, "what does——"

"It means that I must give you up. My love for you is a sin. For me, a poet, slave and servant of beauty, you are temptation incarnate. You can't understand that. You are as cold, as pure, as an angel. You don't realize what love like mine is."

"I'm not!" she cried, pitifully. "I do understand! I'm not cold!"

"Compared to me you are. My love for you was madness. I couldn't think of anything else. It wasn't the gentle affection you felt."

"I didn't feel a gentle affection!" she cried, in tears. "You *couldn't* love me more than I love you!"

"Do you?" he asked, in a sort of stealthy triumph.

She didn't see that. She was utterly sincere; and her beautiful sincerity, her tears, suddenly moved him to one of those tempests of remorse to which he was so prone.

"Oh, God!" he cried. "What a brute I am! I talk about giving you up, and all the time I'm watching your face for signs of love. How can I find the strength to let you go?"

"Don't!" said Angelica, with streaming eyes. "Don't let me go, Vincent darling! Oh, if only we have each other!"

"We can't have each other. It's a sin!" he said. "Don't you *see*? Oh, Angelica! Beautiful Angelica! Why don't you help me? Why do you try to draw me down, and ruin me, and destroy me?" He sprang up, his fine face distorted with grief and passion. "You don't know!" he cried. "Oh, my God! I have sinned! I have sinned! You don't know after what sufferings, what weary wanderings, I have come back to God! You cannot imagine! There is nothing I have not done; no infamy I have not committed!"

And then he began his awful catalogue. He told her of his sins, his vices—vile enough in reality, but exaggerated by his hysteria. He had no medium between ingenious self-excuse and the wildest self-accusation. He took a monstrous sort of joy in his horrible recital. He remembered incidents from his boyhood, of cruelty, bestiality, lust, drunkenness, theft, every sort of dishonour.

"I've been in prison," he said. "No one knows. They thought I was in Canada that year. I've stolen from my own wife and spent the money on vile women. I've been kicked out of disreputable hotels."

It went on and on, a nightmare, things that Angelica had never imagined, all told in his coarse and vivid language which impressed his images upon her mind forever.

"Good God!" he cried. "I'm appalled! How can even the God of mercy forgive such things? Angelica! I am *lost!*"

He threw himself on his knees before her and buried his head in her lap.

"I have been in hell!" he cried. "What am I to do? God, who sees my heart, knows that I repent; but is it enough?"

A feeling new to Angelica came over her, a divine kindness and pity. She stroked his ruffled hair, and tried, in her blindness, her bewilderment, to find words to comfort him.

"Of course!" she said. "If you're sorry, it 'll be all right. You can start all over again."

With his head still buried, he flung his arms about her waist and began to sob, hoarse, terrible sobs. She couldn't bear it.

"Oh, don't! Don't, darling!" she cried.

He raised his head.

"I must be mad!" he said. "I'm so tortured. I long so, I yearn so, after God. I want to be alone with Him, to contemplate Him forever, in solitude—in a desert—to pray to Him—to make my songs to Him. Almost all my verses are of God, Angelica. And then I see a lovely face—I drink

another glass of wine—I read a line of voluptuous beauty—and I am lost again. How will it end? Oh, my merciful God, how will it end?”

She spent almost all the night trying to quiet and console Vincent. She drew his head against her breast and kissed his forehead while she talked to him. She found, almost miraculously, words and ideas which gave him comfort, but with an effort which was torment for her. She had a sensation of fishing in the depths of her mind, and painfully hauling out some thought which she had not been conscious of having there. Her love lent her insight; she discerned the grain of terror that lay beneath the chaff of his theatrical eloquence. She was able to talk to him with piety—she who had no religion, and had never given a thought to such matters. She assured him that his repentance would wipe out his sins.

“Why, Vincent!” she said. “I could forgive anything you did; and you know God must be more forgiving than me.”

Steadfast, gentle, patient as an angel, she sat with him, listened to his confessions, his self-accusations, and absolved him in her love. Who could hold the man to blame for those faults which were his essence? Not God—not she!

II

The clock had struck four. They were sitting side by side on the sofa, both exhausted, pale, quite calm now. Vincent began to talk again, more in his usual voice.

“Angelica,” he said, “Eddie told me that he asked you to marry him, and that you refused him.”

“Of course I did, Vincent.”

“It was a mistake, my dear. It’s the very best thing you could do—both for yourself and for me.”

“Oh, Vincent!” she cried. “I couldn’t! You know I couldn’t!”

"Angelica," he said, solemnly, "do it for my sake. Be my sister. I swear to you that all base and sensual feelings have left my heart. I am purged of all my lust."

Well, so he was, for the moment; but by weariness, not by religion. He had talked himself into exhaustion.

"You couldn't do better," he went on. "I'm not selfish, not jealous. My wish is to see you happy, and you would be happy with Eddie. He's a good man."

He was, in fact, so worn out after his outburst that he felt compelled to get rid of Angelica, not only for the present, but forever. He didn't recognize the feeling. He was conscious only of a great desire to dispose of her, which he fancied was concern for her welfare.

"I want to see your life happy and blessed," he said. "I want to see you with your children about you, you with your beautiful Madonna face. I want always to be near you, but only to worship you. I will be your brother, your friend. I long to see this, Angelica!"

"No," she said, "I don't want to. It wouldn't suit me. I'm not so crazy about getting married, anyway."

"For me, Angelica! I beg you!"

"No, not even for you. I don't want to, and that's enough. I'm young, Vincent. I have all my life before me. You needn't worry about me." A mortal weariness assailed her. "I guess I'll go now," she said. "I'm pretty tired. Good night, Vincent!"

He kissed her solemnly on the brow and opened the door for her. She shut herself into her own room.

"Oh, Gawd!" she sighed. "*Now* what? This is getting too much for me. Can't even think any more. I don't know——"

She undressed and got into bed, though the sky had grown gray in the east. She felt obliged to sleep, even if it were only for an hour; but before she closed her eyes——

"One thing's certain," she said. "I'm going away from here, right away. I can't stand any more of this!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I

This one idea remained with her when she got up from her brief sleep—this determination to get away. Except for this, she was drained quite dry of all ideas, all feelings. She was not poetic; she hadn't the astounding variations of a poetic soul such as Vincent's. She was not at all easy to move, and when she was thoroughly aroused—to pity, to love, to grief, to whatever it might be—it took a very long time for the tempest to calm. She wanted now simply to get away alone, where she might examine this turmoil in her heart.

She packed her bag, put on her hat and coat, and went to Polly's room.

Polly was dressing in her very leisurely fashion, going to and fro in the room, and stopping now and then before the table where her coffee and rolls were laid. She was in petticoat and under-bodice, with her thin, sallow arms and neck bare and her black hair hanging about her face. She had a forlorn and jaded look—for which, however, Angelica had no eyes.

"Mrs. Geraldine," she said, "I got to go. I want to go right away—to-day. I don't feel well."

"I'm very sorry, my dear! What's the trouble?"

"I'm just tired. I've just got to get away. I want to go home."

"But if you're not very well, wouldn't you be more comfortable here?"

"No. I want to go home. I—you know how it is, Mrs. Geraldine, when you feel you *just* got to go home!"

Indeed Polly knew!

"For how long?" she asked. "You don't think you're really seriously ill, do you? You think a little rest at home will set you up in a very short time?"

Angelica hesitated a moment.

"I don't think——" she began. "I don't guess I'll come back."

"Never?"

"No."

"But aren't you happy here? Aren't you comfortable? Tell me what's wrong, and perhaps we can arrange it."

"You couldn't. I'm sorry, but I can't stay—not for anything."

There was no mistaking Angelica's tone. Polly saw that the girl was absolutely determined and not to be turned—not without a long argument, anyway, and that she had no desire to undertake. What is more, she had too much sense to ask questions. She had a suspicion that her husband was somehow concerned in Angelica's going; there was probably a great deal in this thing of which she decidedly preferred to remain ignorant.

She wasn't jealous; that had worn off on that first evening of Vincent's home-coming. It had hurt her dreadfully, then, to see his glance turn always away from her and toward this younger and lovelier face; but now she didn't care whether he was infatuated with Angelica or any one else. She was pleased simply to be on friendly terms with him, to have him agreeable instead of contemptuous, and she knew that was the best she could expect.

She had not the slightest hope of winning him back; she didn't even want to very much. She was so tired; she dreaded the necessity which love brings for effort—for keeping up, in appearances, in spirits. She preferred that Vincent should never look at her at all, rather than to have to endure his old critical glance. She was only too conscious of her sad decline.

So there was nothing in her heart but real regret that Angelica was going. She liked her very much, and was used to her.

"I'm very sorry to lose you," she said. "I'd hoped you were quite settled here. I'll miss you more than I can say."

"You've been very nice to me," said Angelica.

"And you must always remember me as a friend. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, come to me. I mean it!"

She held out her hand, and Angelica gripped it.

"Good-by!" said Polly again. "And good luck! I hope you'll let me know how you get on."

"Yes, I will. But listen, Mrs. Geraldine—can I have my money?"

"Certainly! You'll have to get it from Mr. Geraldine, though. He's in the library, writing."

Angelica was dismayed.

"No," she faltered. "I don't want to bother him. If you'll just give me my train fare, you could send me the rest."

"My dear, I don't think I have even enough for your fare. Mr. Geraldine handles all my money for me."

She was a little ashamed of this arrangement, to which she had eagerly agreed when she and Vincent were first married. It humiliated her to be thus, without a penny.

"You needn't mind disturbing him," she said. "He expects to do such things for me. Come up and say good-by to me the last thing before you go, won't you?"

Angelica said "Yes," quite absently. She was thinking how this interview with Vincent might be avoided. It was the thing above all others she most desired to avoid. She had meant to go off quickly, to *get home*, where she could think in peace, where she could try a little to remember and to comprehend what had happened. She didn't attempt to decide whether or not she would ever see Vincent again; she knew only that she did not want to see him *now*. But she

was too well-trained in poverty, and had too much common sense, to go off penniless, without even her train fare, when there was honestly earned money due to her.

"Shall I wait for Eddie to come home?" she reflected.

No, that wouldn't do at all. She wouldn't know what to say to Eddie, how to explain her leaving. She felt absolutely afraid to see him.

"I'll just have to go to Vincent," she decided. "But *I'm going!* He can't stop me—I don't care what he says!"

It took all her courage. She went down-stairs and into the library. There he sat, writing, as Polly had said. He didn't look up. She stood in the doorway, waiting, for a few minutes; then she said:

"Mr. Geraldine!"

"Yes?" he asked, not looking up from his writing.

"Mrs. Geraldine told me to come to you and get my money."

"I can't be bothered now!" he said irritably. "I'm busy. Can't you see?"

"I'm sorry, but I've got to have it. I'm going."

"Going, Angelica?" he said, looking up at last.

"Yes. I want to catch the ten-forty. So if you'll just give me my money, I'll go right away."

He resumed his writing.

"Too bad!" he said. "I really haven't got it."

"Please don't be so mean!" she cried. "For Gawd's sake, give it to me, and let me go!" Her fatigue and her distress at his callousness were unnerving her. She felt ready to burst into tears. "Just give it to me and let me go!" she said again.

"I haven't it," said Vincent.

"You haven't got any money?"

"Not a sou."

"But you can get it for me?"

He shook his head.

"No, my dear, dear girl. You'll have to wait."

"How long—an hour?"

"I can't say."

"But what do you mean?"

"I mean that I haven't any money. I said so before."

"But Mrs. Geraldine said you had all her money."

"Then Mrs. Geraldine will have to be informed, very kindly, that her income is mortgaged for the next two years. I had to do it. You see, she has a little annuity, which she lets me collect. Well, I was embarrassed. I had to borrow money against it. So, you see, that's *that!* She hasn't anything; and I—I'm penniless as a gipsy. Now you comprehend, I hope."

And to her amazement he began to write again.

"Say!" she cried. "This won't do!"

"Don't bother me, my dear girl. I'm at work," he said, frowning. "On a poem."

"But you can't put me off like this!"

"I'm writing!" he cried, in a sudden rage. "I don't care about you and your money. Let me alone!"

"You've got to stop writing, then. I don't care about you and your writing. You've got to pay me!"

He sprang to his feet.

"Get out!" he shouted. "How dare you trouble me about your dirty money? Good God! Lines such as I had, ready to put down, and to have them ruined by a greedy, good-for-nothing little servant girl! I *have* no money. If I had, I wouldn't give it to you. You don't deserve it. Idling away your time, aping your betters, draggling about in their cast-off finery! If they weren't both of them lazy and worthless themselves, they'd have turned you out long ago. Get out!"

And he caught her by the arm and thrust her into the hall, slamming the door behind her.

Angelica rushed up-stairs like a whirlwind and into Polly's room, panting, quite beside herself with fury.

"Him!" she cried. "He turned me out! Took me by the arm and shoved me out into the hall! He——"

Polly had been putting on her hat before the mirror, but she threw it down in haste, to give all her attention to this frantic young thing.

"What were you saying to him?" she asked, mildly.

"Nothing! Not a blame thing! Only just asking him for my money, like you told me. Ah, he's a fine feller, he is! The names he called me—and just last night crying and saying he couldn't live away from me!"

And she told all the story to Polly—even showed her Vincent's letter.

"Now!" she said. "Give me my carfare, and I'll go."

"I have nothing. Perhaps Mrs. Russell——"

But Mrs. Russell was out. Polly was in misery. There was this terrible girl, demanding her money, implacably waiting for it, this girl whom her husband had treated so shockingly. Her only wish in life was to be rid of her.

"Take my ring," she said. "It's worth ten times what you want."

"I can't buy a ticket with it. I don't believe you have any money, the lot of you!"

Paradise was lost, her hopes destroyed, her pride mortally wounded; so, having nothing to lose, she let herself go. She threw off all restraint; she was as coarse, as fierce, as she wished to be.

Polly was wonderfully patient with the girl.

"You shall be paid," she said. "I'll go down with you to Mr. Geraldine. If he hasn't any ready money, he'll write you a cheque."

He still sat there writing. He paid no attention to them as they opened the door and went in.

"Vincent!" said Polly. "Will you please write a cheque for Angelica at once?"

Then he laid down his pen and looked at them for a long time in contemptuous silence.

"I told her," he said, "just what I shall tell you. I have no money."

“But, Vincent, a cheque——”

He smiled, pulled a cheque-book out of his pocket, and wrote. Tearing out a leaf, he handed it to Angelica. She stared at it.

“What do you mean?” she cried.

Polly looked over her shoulder.

“Please don’t joke, Vincent,” she said. “Please give her what is due her.”

For he had drawn a cheque for ten thousand dollars.

“My dear Polly, any cheque I wrote would be equally ridiculous. There’s nothing in the bank.”

“Then where is it, Vincent?”

“I’ve told you. My investments——”

“But my income? Surely that——”

He began to show irritability.

“I tell you,” he said, “that it’s all gone. Now, for God’s sake, my dear soul, go away! Can’t you see I’m trying to write?”

“But my income——”

“Oh, you and your damned income!” he shouted. “You women and your beastly greed! Haven’t you any soul? Can’t you think of anything but money?”

“No, I can’t, Vincent, just now. It’s a very serious matter,” said Polly, gravely.

He jumped up with an oath.

“It’s disposed of for the next two years,” he cried. “You left it to my judgment. I’ve used my judgment. And now you come whining and sniveling about your handful of pennies. By God, I’m entitled to it! The whole thing doesn’t amount to what you cost me in a month—your clothes and your——”

“Never mind that, please. Do you mean that we can’t pay Angelica?”

“Good God! Is your head made of wood? Or are you getting senile?”

Polly went on, as unheeding of his gross rudeness as a

rock is of the spray that dashes over it. Quiet and resolute, she pursued her investigations. Her money was her life, her peace, her freedom, her dignity; she knew that she could not earn any more, and that there was no other man to give it to her. She must have it!

Angelica observed her with profound admiration. Even to further her own best interests, even, she fancied, to save her own life, she couldn't have remained so calm, so self-controlled.

"Do you mean," she went on, "that we have nothing?"

"I do not! We have all sorts of things—paintings, books, your jewelry. Simply we have no *money*. Now let me alone!"

"But what do you propose doing?" she asked. "We can't go on, like this, without a penny. How do you propose to pay Angelica?"

He raised his upper lip in a brutal sort of sneer.

"Oh, you don't know, do you? Of course not! You're perfectly innocent, aren't you? You never suspected, did you, who it was paid for the clothes on your back? It'll be such a shock to you, dear soul! In our need we shall have to turn to Eddie! He'll pay Angelica, he'll pay me, and he'll pay you. God bless Eddie!"

That blow told. Polly winced under it. She turned away slowly and went out of the room. Angelica followed her, and, looking back from the doorway, she saw Vincent writing again.

II

Angelica had started an avalanche. She was deeply impressed and interested. She had no desire to go now; she wished to see the tremendous end.

Events moved with satisfactory speed. Polly went at once to Mrs. Russell's room, to find her just arrived at home

from a Stricken Belgium card-party. They closed the door; they were shut in there a long time together. They must, of course, have summoned by telephone the two unhappy and disturbed gentlemen who came in a motor-car later in the afternoon.

When these came, they all went into the library, where Vincent still sat. There was a dreadful scene. The newcomers were Polly's lawyer and the trustee of her first husband's estate, and they at once attacked Vincent. The trustee was non-legal and devoid of wise caution; he shouted threats at Vincent, and Vincent cursed him in the voice of a bull. He was beside himself with fury. The lawyer tried to frighten them both into silence, but he was himself so appalled and outraged by their ignorance of what was and what wasn't libelous that his arguments were weak.

Polly was distressed, but resolute.

"No!" she implored the raging trustee. "No, Frank, *don't*, please! Only find out just what has happened and see what you can save for me. Don't trouble to quarrel with him."

Vincent turned on her.

"Yes!" he screamed in a high, hysterical voice. "Yes! You'll fight to defend your *money*, at least! You don't care about anything else. It never pierced your damned self-satisfaction when I was off with other women——"

"Vincent!" said his mother in a low, shocked voice.

"Very well! Very well!" he cried. "I don't mind them knowing. I did take her miserable little income and spend it on other women. For God's sake, who wouldn't? Look at her! Do you think *she*——"

"Just tell him, please," said Polly to the lawyer, "that I intend to leave him immediately and to obtain a divorce, and that he must give up any authority he ever got from me."

"That will be arranged, Mrs. Geraldine," said the lawyer. Suddenly Mrs. Russell began to cry.

"Oh, Polly!" she said. "Don't give the poor boy up! Give him another chance! Oh, do, do, do!"

She stopped suddenly. Vincent, too, stopped his violence and his curses. Eddie had come in.

Eddie's peculiar power had never before been so unmistakably demonstrated. He had never before had such an opportunity for showing how much of a man he was. He was master of the situation, master of every one. He brushed aside the clamour, the furious arguments; he wished only for information, and he knew how to get it.

He addressed himself chiefly to the lawyer, with now and then a question to Polly. He listened carefully, and one could almost read in his face the functioning of his just and clear mind.

Angelica watched him through the keyhole. This wasn't *her* Eddie, who stammered in her presence, who could be roused by a single look from her black eyes. Here was a man quite beyond her influence, immeasurably superior to her, a man undeniably fine.

She listened to him speaking. He addressed Vincent with a quiet, dispassionate sort of contempt; he told him that he would return to Polly what Vincent had stolen from her.

"And I will apologize to you, too," he said to Angelica, when he came out of the library, "for all this that you've had to go through here in my house. I think you're quite right to leave. If you'll go up-stairs now, I'll talk the matter over with these gentlemen. You and I can discuss it later."

III

So it was over. The house was quiet again, and they were all shut in their several rooms. Angelica went to Polly's door and knocked.

"It's Angelica," she said. "Anything I can do for you?"

Polly's voice came, after a long interval, faint and mournful:

"No, thank you!"

So then where should she turn but, naturally, to Eddie? She was very unhappy. She felt ashamed of herself now, terribly lonely, banished, and disgraced. Of course Polly would tell Eddie—perhaps already had told him—all that Angelica had told her, all about that disgraceful affair with Vincent, and she would lose, or perhaps already had lost, Eddie's regard. Just when she needed it so, when she had been so cruelly repudiated by Vincent!

"Well, anyway, I want to see him," she said to herself. "Anyway, he won't fly out at me, even if he thinks I've been awful!"

She couldn't find him for a long time. She wandered about the house like a lost soul; and then at last she came across him on the veranda, sitting there smoking, in the chilly October evening.

"Mr. Eddie!" she said softly, from the doorway.

"Oh! Yes?" he answered pleasantly. "Is it you, Angelica? Do you want anything?"

"I just wanted to speak to you——"

"Shall I come in?"

"I'll come out," she suggested, glad of the chance to talk in the dark, and groped her way to the corner where she saw the light of his cigar.

"It's a dark night," he said.

"It's—sad out here," said Angelica. "So—damp, and all."

"There's a big storm coming. I wanted to speak to you, Angelica. I'm very glad you came. I wanted—I've some money that's due you. You see, I'm going away to-morrow."

"Going where?"

"To a training-camp—before I go to France, you know."

"Oh, dear!" she cried, with quite genuine dismay. "Oh, Mr. Eddie, I *am* sorry! I hate to have you gone!"

"I don't like to go," he admitted, simply. "And especially

I don't like to leave you like this. I wish that it could have been different."

She waited a moment.

"I suppose I better be going to-morrow, too," she said.

"I suppose so. There's nothing more for you here, Angelica. Polly's going away, you know, and——"

"Mr. Eddie!" she cried. "Tell me! Tell me, honestly, do you think I—it was my fault? If you'd only please tell me everything they told you—Mrs. Geraldine, and all! What did she say about me—and—that?"

"Polly?" he asked. "She didn't say anything about you at all, except that she liked you very much, and that she thought Vincent had behaved very badly toward you."

"My Gawd!" said Angelica under her breath. "She never told him! He don't know a thing!"

"I don't blame you at all," he said. "Not in any way. You lost your temper—perhaps you lost your head a little—but you had great provocation. You see, Angelica, Vincent came to me and explained the whole thing. I must say he was very candid—and fine about it. He told me frankly that he had tried to—mislead you, and that you refused to listen to him; and that that was the reason he behaved so badly to you. Of course, he *has* behaved badly, all around,—shamefully; but still—he has good points. I thought it was a—a plucky sort of thing to do, you know, especially when we were on such bad terms. He said he couldn't bear to think of your being blamed in any sort of way."

Angelica was amazed and delighted that she had been made into a persecuted heroine. She was filled with admiration for Vincent's nobility; and yet she could dimly perceive that there was something behind it, that he gained something he wanted by this false confession. It seemed a miracle that Eddie had been spared, both by him and by Polly, those very facts which Angelica was so anxious for him not to know.

"He said he was sorry for the whole thing," Eddie went

on. "He begged me to try to influence Polly to give him another chance. I couldn't do that. I simply said I'd tell her exactly what he had said, and what he'd done. I did. I had a long talk with her; but she's finished with him. She didn't say a word against him, but—she's finished with him."

"But is it that—about me? Is that the reason she's leaving him?" Angelica asked, with anxiety.

"No! As far as that goes, there are plenty of things far worse—in that *line*, you know. No! I think it's chiefly about the money. She says she couldn't trust him again. She says it's impossible to live with him under such conditions. I suppose it is. Anyway, she's absolutely determined to leave him."

Angelica sat in silence, more utterly wretched than ever. Had Vincent just sacrificed himself for her? Did he really love her? And for his love was he to be utterly cast out?"

"No!" she said suddenly, aloud.

"No what?" asked Eddie.

"Nothing. I was just thinking. There comes the rain!" she cried. "Gosh, what a storm!"

They both got up, to push back their chairs against the wall of the house, but even there it reached them—the spray from the rain falling in straight, heavy lines, dashing against the earth with a fierce drumming noise that filled the air and confused the senses. The smell of the soil, the dead leaves, the grass, came to them with its own invigorating freshness; and in spite of the chilly sprinkle in their faces they lingered; fascinated by the noise, the wet odours, the great black, uproarious void before them. They stood close together, their shoulders touching, their backs against the wall.

"Angelica!" said Eddie's voice in her ear, curiously flat and faint in the surrounding din. "Angelica, *can't* you? Just think—if I could only know—while I'm away—that you—that you were waiting for me!"

"Eddie," she replied, "I couldn't. Not now, anyway. Perhaps—later. I don't know."

"You mean—you think some day—it's not *impossible*? You *could*, then? I mean—I'm not repulsive to you?"

"Deary boy!" she protested. "Of course you're not."

"Do you think you could—kiss me?" he asked. "I'm going away to-morrow."

She turned, put a hand upon his shoulder, and kissed him on the cheek.

"There!" she said. "Now you see!"

He didn't move; stood there like a statue.

"I guess we'd better go in," she said. "We're getting wet; and I've got to pack up my things."

To go home! She began for the first time to imagine her home-coming, to think of her future. This was all over; she would never get another such job, never again be in a house like this, never again have a chance like this!

She began to think of the kitchen, of the factory, of their suppers of tea and bread and margarine, of her mother, listless and hopeless—all of it hopeless—even Vincent. What could he ever do for her, even if he had the inclination? Who was there on earth who cared to do anything for her, who could give her in any way the things she craved? Panic overwhelmed her.

"Eddie!" she cried. "I—could!"

He was suddenly galvanized into life.

"Could?" he cried. "Could what?"

"If you want—I'll marry you!"

His arms went around her, pressing her tightly against his coat. A smell of damp tweed and cigar-smoke filled her nostrils; she couldn't see or move at all, her head was so buried in his clumsy embrace.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried. "Oh, Angelica, to think that I have to go *now*!"

"But I'll be waiting for you," she said.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

She stood on the front steps long after he was out of sight, lost in a painful reverie. The rain was still falling steadily and violently, without wind, from a pale gray sky. She watched it, absently, churning the gravel walk, splashing up again from the puddles. What a desolate and tremendous world that morning!

Eddie was really gone. She had said good-by to that generous and loyal friend, had pressed his hand and tried to smile brightly after him. He hadn't wanted her to go to the railway-station with him.

"No," he had said. "Let's say good-by here, in the place that's going to be our home."

He was in a bad state. He did all he knew to conceal it, but it was none the less apparent to her that he was deeply troubled by the thought of what lay before him, that he was most reluctant to go, unhappy, alarmed, and a little puzzled. He was ashamed of all this, he wished to be a man, like Vincent, and he naively believed that a true man was practically devoid of any emotion, except love and anger.

Nevertheless, disturbed as he was, he didn't for a moment neglect his beloved Angelica's interests. He wished to know how she was to get on.

"I'll find another job," she said.

He didn't object; he really considered that it would be best for her to remain sturdily independent, under no obligation to him.

"I've made a will," he said hurriedly, "so that if I don't come back, you'll be all right. In the mean time, if you do need anything, here's my lawyer's address. I've told him to give you anything you ask for without question."

Mrs. Russell, too, had gone. She had felt so upset by Eddie's departure and Polly's cruel behaviour that she was obliged to take a ten-day motor-trip with the doctor and Courtland. She hadn't remembered to bid Angelica good-by.

Polly, however, had been very, very kind. She had given Angelica several little presents, which wasn't her way, and she had spoken to her with a sincere kindness.

"My dear girl," she had said, "this has been a wretched thing for you. I only hope it won't really harm you. You mustn't let it. Try to forget it. Just now, perhaps, there's a sort of glamour—but after you've been gone for a while, I think you'll see it all more clearly"—meaning Vincent all the time, of course. "If only you could find some work that you could put your heart into, Angelica—something you are suited to! What do you think you'd like?"

"Well, I guess I'm going to marry Eddie——"

"Yes," said Polly, who didn't think that would ever come to pass. "But he may be gone for a long time; and meanwhile you'd like to show him, wouldn't you, what you can do?"

"I guess I'd like dressmaking and millinery," said Angelica.

"Very likely I can find some sort of opening for you. I know quite a number of self-supporting girls. Keep in touch with me, be sure!"

The house was very quiet. There was nothing to distract her, and Angelica was able to meditate at her leisure. She thought first of herself and her return to her mother, of that "going back" which was so difficult to this ardent spirit always eager to go forward.

She suffered under a terrible discontent and restlessness. She was ashamed of the past, disgusted with the future. She felt that life, real life, was ended; the adventure finished, the mysterious charm lost.

Try as she would, she could not keep her mind from straying to Vincent. He was adventure and charm, life itself, for

her. She told herself that she was going to forget him. He had treated her very badly, and she was done with him. She was going to marry Eddie and be done with Vincent *forever*.

But she knew that she could not. Wouldn't she see forever in her dreams that big, arrogant man with his hawk-like face and his bright hair? He had hurt her, but he had made her happy, too. He had come upon her with violence. Everything about his brief love-making had been startling and disturbing. She had often hated him, but she had always loved him—always, from that moment when she had seen him standing in the doorway of Mrs. Russell's room.

Then she gave her attention to Eddie, with a queer soreness of heart. She felt that she was taking advantage of Eddie; that he was too good for her. She was so sorry for him, so full of affection and respect for him—and so disinclined to think about him!

She fancied she saw coming the taxi which was to take her to the station, and she ran up-stairs to fetch her bag. Her familiar room was neat and desolate, with the green blinds pulled half-way down, the bureau and dressing-table stripped bare, the bed covered over with a sheet. All trace of her was obliterated. It saddened her; she took a last glance at herself in the darkened mirror and went out, closing the door behind her.

She almost ran into Annie, who had been on the point of knocking on her door.

"Mr. Vincent says he'd like to see you in the music-room for a few minutes," the maid said curtly.

"No!" said Angelica, and then, almost immediately: "Yes!"

After all, she ought to see him, after what he had done. She ought to thank him. Even if she were going to marry Eddie, there was no harm in that. In fact, Eddie would doubtless have approved of it.

"He won't eat me," she said. "Let's see what he's got to say!"

She tried to prepare herself for anything, whether she found him pleading, passionate, brutal, or depressed. She felt herself quite strong enough to withstand any of his moods—stronger than he was.

She entered again that little music-room where Mrs. Russell had interviewed her so long ago; but to-day it had taken on quite a new character. He had pulled the shades up to the top of the windows, so that the cold light of the rainy day came in to destroy the charm and romance of the armour, the harp, and the orange-shaded lamp that had so delighted her.

Vincent sat on the piano-stool, writing on the closed piano. He was without a coat, in a gray flannel shirt and old blue trousers. His hair was all on end, in wildest disorder, and his face, when he turned to Angelica, was troubled and ecstatic. He looked boyish, very touching, and his manner was altogether unstudied.

"Angelica!" he said. "Please listen to this! Just tell me—these few lines—do you get a picture at all? I mean—just tell me exactly how it makes you feel—not what you think of it, you know, but how you *feel*. Sit down, please, and keep quiet. Now, you know, this is almost the end of the thing—the chap's losing his faith—before he has the vision. It's free verse, of course—an impression:

"Men crushed down, like worms under a heavy foot,
 Half stamped into the mud, but the other half
 Still squirming. Writhing corpses
 With writhing wounds,
 From which the blood squirts violently;
 And over it all, in a cloud of mist, rose and gold,
 Rides God.
 God! God! God, the father of all these mutilated animals!
 God Almighty, whose will it is to kill his sons in these hideous
 ways!
 He sees everything. He hears everything. He hears their yells,

Their howls for pity and for death. He could stamp the worm
Quite out of existence;
Smear it into the ground so that it should be obliterated and
At peace;
But for His own good purposes, He lets it squirm!"

Angelica was quite stupefied; she had no clue, no dimmest idea what to say. She didn't even know whether this weird stuff was meant to be funny. She thought it was and yet——

"You see," he went on, "it's meant to be horrible. It is horrible, isn't it?"

"Sure!" said Angelica. "It is."

"Now wait!" he said peremptorily, and swung round again on the stool, to continue his writing.

"Wait!" he muttered again. "Don't go! I want you to hear this!"

She sat perfectly still for a long time. Then, suddenly, he groaned, looked round at her with a sort of glare, and tore up his paper with an oath.

"No!" he cried. "No! I can't *get* it! Lord, it's such torment!"

He buried his head in his hands.

"Angelica!" he said in a muffled voice. "Please come here!"

"What is it, Vincent?" she asked gently.

"Angelica! What's going to become of me?" he asked huskily, his face still hidden.

The question startled her.

"Why, I don't know," she said. "I suppose you——"

"But I'm all alone!" he said in a sort of bewilderment.

"They've all left me, and you're going, too!"

She didn't dare to touch him, but her voice was a caress.

"Vincent, I'm sorry!"

He looked up and seized her hand.

"Oh, my love!" he said. "Aren't we *fools*? Even to think

of such a thing as parting! You and I, Angelica, to part! It couldn't be!"

"It's got to be, Vincent," she answered, trying to withdraw her hand.

"No, it's not. No, Angelica, you shan't leave me!"

"Vincent!" she said. "Don't! You've made enough trouble. Don't make any more."

"It's you who are making the trouble. You're breaking my heart, and your own too—yes, yours! You can't deny it! Every drop of blood in your body tells you the same thing. You need me and you long for me as I need and long for you."

"Please!" she said, beginning to cry. "You know I'm going to marry Eddie."

"There's no one else in the world but you and me. All other people, all other things, are shadows—lies—folly! You are a woman and I am a man, and we love each other. We cannot part!"

"I must!" she said desperately. "You know I must!"

"No! No! Only love me, Angelica, and care for nothing else. Oh, you could not be so base and cowardly as to leave me!"

"Oh, Vincent!" she sobbed. "You talk like a fool! You know I can't stay here!"

"Look here!" he said. "Eddie gave me a hundred dollars. Come away with me—now—this instant! Anywhere—it doesn't matter. Just as we are, friendless, homeless, penniless—just you and I, to make our way together in the world."

She shook her head, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh, why didn't you let me alone?" she cried, forlornly.

"My girl, how could I? I couldn't lose you," he said, surprised. "I couldn't let you go."

"But you must!"

"But I won't!"

"If you do really love me, you won't make me so miserable——"

"Angelica, I don't love like that. I don't care whether you're unhappy or not. I want you! I am mad for you! Even if it means your damnation and ruin, on earth and in hell! I don't care for anything but you—not for God Himself!"

"Don't talk like that!"

"It's true. I know well what I'm doing. For you I've lost my immortal soul. I haven't a soul now. I love you as Satan loves. I want to drag you down to hell with me!"

Angelica, however, was by no means so concerned with hell as she was with this world.

"But think what would become of me!" she cried.

"Who cares?"

This viewpoint startled her.

"Well," she said, "I care."

"No, you don't," he answered. "You only care for me."

She wished to argue, to defend herself; but it was too late. She was lost. His words so appealed to the recklessness in her own nature, to her devil-may-care heart, that she could not counter them. She loved this man; her whole heart urged her blindly to follow him, to do what he asked, to hurry gloriously to destruction.

She made a half-hearted effort to get away from him, but he only held her closer. He looked down at her and laughed.

"No use!" he said. "You don't *want* to go!"

Suddenly she flung her arms about his neck, and clung to him, looking up into his bold eyes.

"All right!" she cried. "I don't care!"

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE.

I

Mrs. Kennedy was very tired that afternoon. She had just finished scrubbing a kitchen for a tenant, crawling laboriously across the greasy soft-wood boards with her brush and her pail and her cloth. There had been some foreign sort of fish stew cooking on the stove all the time, and the smell had turned her sick. She had got splinters into her water-softened hands, and her back ached with a ferocious, burning ache. She came down the basement stairs carrying the empty pail, slowly—far more slowly than she used to come.

“There’s not a thing in for my supper,” she thought. “Well, I shan’t bother to go out and get anything. I’ll just lay me down and rest. I’m tired—tired *out!*”

The front door was unlatched. She pushed it open with her foot, and went along to the kitchen. She wanted a cup of tea, but she couldn’t make the effort to get it ready. She couldn’t even lie down. She sat on the step-ladder chair, straightening her aching back and supporting it with one hand while her eyes roved about her neat and dismal little domain, hoping to discover what she very well knew wasn’t there—something to eat, prepared and ready.

She was beginning to be dulled and blunted by solitude. Her life’s incentive was gone; she had no reason for working and living other than an animal reason—to feed herself. Her spirit had no food, and it was perishing.

She had a vague distaste for death, which was just sufficiently stronger than her apathy to preserve her existence. She slept in her underground cave, cooked and ate what was essential, kept it and herself respectable and clean, and went dully on working, working, going wherever she was bidden, doing whatever she was told.

She had decided to go out to the corner, to buy two bananas for her supper, when the door opened and Angelica came in.

She was just the same—jaunty, swaggering. It might have been one of those long-past evenings when she came back from work, tired, but restless and hungry. She had the same shabby suit and ungloved hands.

“Hello, mommer!” she said.

Amazing to see the change in that worn face!

“*Angie!* For goodness’ sake! I never looked for *you!* Why ever didn’t you write, deary, so’s I’d have something in for your supper?”

“It don’t matter, mommer. I’ll go out and get something.”

“I’ll get my purse——”

“No—I got some money. Listen, mommer, I’m going to stay home with you a while. Mr. Eddie’s gone to the war and Mrs. Geraldine’s gone away. Now, for Gawd’s sake, don’t begin to ask a lot of questions! I’m dead tired. I’ll go out and get something for us to eat, and we’ll go to the movies after. You put on the water for tea now, while I run to the corner.”

But even after the front door had slammed, it was some time before Mrs. Kennedy got up to put on the kettle.

“What ever is she doing home now, all of a sudden, like this?” she asked herself. “I don’t see. Oh, I do hope there’s nothing wrong! She’s so hasty!”

Angelica came in again with a great paper bag.

“I got a regular treat,” she said. “Sardines, rolls, cheese, and a nice big can of cherries!”

"You mustn't waste your money, deary," said her mother mechanically.

They both set to work to open the tins, brew the tea, and lay out the supper.

"It does taste good," Mrs. Kennedy admitted. "Somehow, when I'm alone, I haven't got the heart to buy things and cook them. It's nice to see you again, Angie!"

"I dare say you'll soon be sick of me," said Angelica. "Now, come along, mommer, put on your hat and coat!"

They went out together, the tall, swaggering daughter, the small, decorous mother, along the swarming streets to their favourite moving-picture "palace." It was exactly the sort of picture Mrs. Kennedy liked, a "society" one, and in addition her daughter bought her a box of caramels. In every way a treat, a notable evening!

And yet, all the time, her vague anxiety persisted. She had questions which she felt she must ask. They went home, and to bed, without her having summoned courage to put them. Then, at last:

"Angie!" she said softly in the dark. "Angie!"

Not a sound. Angelica must have fallen asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.

II

Mrs. Kennedy was very much surprised to see Angelica spring out of bed the next morning at six o'clock, for she had always liked to lie in bed till the last possible instant. Her mother was still more surprised to hear her say:

"I'll get the breakfast, mommer!"

"You needn't to, deary. I guess you want a little rest."

"Rest, nothing! I'm going out to hunt for a job this morning."

"But aren't you ever going back there—to Mrs. Russell's?"

"Not much! I'm going back to the factory again."

"Oh, Angie! I'm sorry!"

"Why? You made enough row about my going to Mrs. Russell's."

"Only because I didn't think you could get the place; but now that you did, I'd hate to see you go back. I'd like to see you better yourself."

"Oh, for Gawd's sake! That stuff again! No! Let me tell you, mommer, I'm through with all that. I'm all right the way I am. I'm good enough—as good as any of *them*, anyway."

She put on her hat and went out, without a kiss, without a good-by, and Mrs. Kennedy saw no more of her till six o'clock, when she came in, pale and scowling.

"What's the matter with the supper?" she said, roughly. "Why ain't it ready?"

"I just got in myself," said Mrs. Kennedy. "I had a hard day."

"Well, you're not the only one," said Angelica. "What you got?"

"I'll have to run to the corner."

"Now, see here!" said her child. "I won't stand this! I'm not going to wait this way. If you can't have my supper ready when I get home, I won't come home—d'ye understand?"

This was but the first indication of a change, a profound change, in Angelica. Her mother saw it with anguish. She was rougher, coarser, more cruel. She was brusque with her mother in a way quite different from her old, careless fashion. She was cold, critical, scornful.

She had got back her job in the factory where she had worked before, but she didn't bring her money home now. Her mother was obliged to ask for some when she had nothing left to buy what her child demanded; and then, fiercely reluctant, Angelica would throw down on the table a crumpled dollar bill.

Her habits were altogether changed. She spent no more evenings with her mother at home or at the movies. She went about with other factory girls, to dance-halls and cabarets of the cheapest sort. She bought herself daring blouses, thin as a veil, through which her lean brown shoulders shone; she wore short skirts, and had gauzy silk stockings on her long legs; she painted her face with exaggeration.

"Angie!" her mother remonstrated. "You don't look *decent!*"

"I don't want to," she replied.

Night after night she stopped out until one o'clock. Then her mother would be awakened by voices in the courtyard—a kiss, very likely, a scuffle, a slap. That was Angelica and her escort, saying good night.

Then she would come in, jaded, irritable, the paint very brilliant on her pale face, and begin undressing—not in the dark, as she had done formerly, to avoid disturbing her mother. She would come into the room with no effort to be quiet, light the gas, and dawdle about, while the poor anxious woman in bed lay watching her, sometimes asking questions, but timidly, dreading a rebuff.

"Bah! I'm so sick of it!" Angelica told her one night. "Those cheap dances—those smart Johnnies mauling you round with their sweaty hands—and then a glass of beer and a whole lot of their cheap talk. *Cheap*, all of it! I'm sick of—everything!"

She had flung herself down fully dressed on her cot, her soiled white shoes on the clean spread."

"Just *sick!*" she repeated, with a break in her voice.

Her mother was moved.

"Maybe it's because you got used to better sort of people out where you were," she said.

Angelica raised herself and looked at her.

"*Better!* Well, maybe they were. I don't know. Only—I don't know—I did get to like having things nice, and hear-

ing nice voices. All this is kind of a sudden change. And the bunch I go out with—Lord, what a bunch!”

“Then why do you go out so much, deary? Why don’t you stay home?”

“Oh, for Gawd’s sake, mommer! After working all day, a girl my age can’t sit home alone all evening.”

Alone! The poor woman winced.

“You could read magazines, or get books out of the library.”

“I don’t want to read. There’s nothing in books. I want to live. I want to find out if there’s anything—anywhere.”

“What do you mean, deary? If there’s anything anywhere?”

“Oh, it don’t matter! I’m going to bed. Good night!”

They went on in this way for weeks. What misery for the mother! She was nothing to her child; she could not even serve her. Angelica had become completely independent. She didn’t want to talk to Mrs. Kennedy, to go out with her, to stay at home with her.

Moreover, she had grown indifferent to the little niceties about which she had once been so fastidious. Sometimes she would get in earlier than her mother. Then, without waiting, she would get some sort of meal for herself, eaten off the tub tops, from the saucepan in which it was cooked. She would spend a long time dressing herself in her vivid finery, leaving the dirty pots for her mother to wash. Then again she wouldn’t appear until late, long after Mrs. Kennedy had disposed of her meal.

“We met some of the fellers,” she would say; “and we hung around a while and ate a lot of candy. I don’t want any dinner.”

One evening her mother weakly reproached her for her lateness.

“There I had a nice bit of chopped meat fried and ready for you,” she said. “You ought to let me know when you’re

not coming in. It's a trouble to me and a waste of money to buy things and you not to touch them."

"Forget it!" said her child. "I'm never in any hurry to get home, I can tell you. To this hole! Why should I?"

"To see me!" cried her mother in desperation.

"Been seeing you every day for nineteen years. No, mommer, you can't keep me hanging round you any more. I got to be free."

"That don't mean you're not to be kind and loving to——"

"Well, I'm *not* kind and loving. Gawd didn't make me that way."

Her mother grew more and more certain that Angelica had met with some disaster in her past situation. She thought over it at night when she lay in bed, in the day while she worked—thought of it with anguish and terror. Her peasant soul forgot its acquired American sophistication, and craved that age-old solace nowhere to be found in her present mode of life—a priest, a pastor, some one in authority to reassure her.

She hadn't even neighbours to gossip with, as people had in the "old country." There was no one who had seen her child grow up, who knew all about her, and could and would discuss her with kindly penetration. A stranger in a strange land, but—how wretchedly!—a stranger to whom no country was home. Certainly America was not her heart's land; certainly Scotland, the home of her parents, would have seemed wholly alien; while her husband's birthplace, to her, was little more than a fantastic dream-land.

Unto the third generation does this strangeness persist. Angelica herself had that peculiar lack of ease, that exotic quality; she was an outsider. Her factory friends, too—they were of every race, and they had all become alike. Bohemian, Irish, Russian, Italian—they had all the same air; but it was a foreign air. Their adopted country had undeniably changed them into something different, but it had not made them American. It had made them only strangers.

III

One morning Angelica didn't get up. Her mother, in great anxiety, came over to her, to make enquiries, but Angelica drove her away with fierceness, swearing at her, abusing her.

"Let me alone!" she cried. "Shut your mouth and mind your own business!"

"Oh, Angie, Angie!" said the poor soul. "If you'd only talk to me! If you only had the sense to know how I could help you!"

"Shut up!" screamed Angelica, hysterically. "And get out! Don't speak to me again!"

Mrs. Kennedy took up her pail and went out; but half-way up the stairs she collapsed. She sat down on one of the steps and tried to pray; but she didn't know quite what to ask of God.

Because she *knew*; she couldn't doubt any longer. She knew what was wrong with Angelica!

She didn't really want to pray. She wanted God to do the talking. She wanted to listen to Him, not to talk to Him; to discuss it, to ask questions, to have an explanation, to hear the voice of authority.

What was the use of sitting there telling Him what He surely knew? Or to beg for mercy or pity, when what she wanted was advice? Not that vague sort of "guidance" which one prayed for, and which really meant puzzling things out alone as best one could. There was one thing, though——

"Oh, Lord!" she prayed. "Soften Thou her heart and let her turn to me!"

She remembered afterward how miraculously this prayer was answered.

She was scrubbing the vestibule—a task of peculiar hopelessness, because people always came in to walk over it all

the time she was trying to clean it. She heard a voice say "Mommer!" and, looking up, saw her child, huddled in an old wrapper, standing before her. Angelica was struggling with a deadly nausea. She was frightened and desperate, her face a sickly white, her hair in dank disorder.

"Mommer!" she said again. "Come down-stairs! I feel awful sick!"

Her mother got up, leaving pail and brush where they were, and put an arm around this beloved child, so much taller and stronger than she, and yet, in her youth and her ignorance, so much weaker. She helped her down-stairs and into bed again.

"Lie still!" she said. "That's the best you can do, my deary. It'll pass away."

"Can't you get me some sort of medicine, mommer?"

"Nothing that would help you, my deary," Mrs. Kennedy told her. "You've just got to bear it, Angelica."

The girl looked up with somber eyes.

"Mommer," she said, "listen! What do you guess is the matter with me?"

"Angelica, my deary, I *know!*"

"Then, mommer, I'm going to kill myself!"

Her mother said nothing at all, but to herself she thought:

"Why not? It would be the best and the quickest for both of us. If you don't—oh, what's ahead of us, and how ever can we go through with it?"

Angelica searched her mother's face, but in vain; it was impassive.

"What else *can* I do?" she cried.

"There's always something that can be done," said her mother. "We'll try and think, deary."

"Mommer!"

"Yes, my deary?"

"Do you feel—different to me?"

"No, Angelica, nor ever shall!"

But she did. Strong in the simple soul was the old wor-

ship of the virgin. Angelica had been before a mystic and holy thing. She was now no more than a woman, like herself; and a woman is no fit object for worship.

Mrs. Kennedy wasn't shocked, in a moral sense. She didn't dwell much upon that side of the case. Her great concern was with practical problems—above all, how they were to get the money which she knew would be needed. She always spoke of girls in similar situations as "unfortunate," and that is just the way she saw it.

She sat at the bedside, trying her best to make some sort of plan.

CHAPTER TWO

I

But Angelica herself! That *she* should be undergoing this horror, this nightmare, this incredible thing she had heard of and read of!

“Oh, mommer!” she cried. “Oh, *mommer!* It’s the worst thing I ever heard of! I’m the worst——”

“Hush, deary! Don’t talk so wild. It’s bad, I must admit, but you’re young, and I dare say you loved the man and trusted in him, to your sorrow.”

Angelica turned her face to the wall. That was the very worst of it. She hadn’t really trusted Vincent at all. She had simply followed an instinct of which she understood nothing. She had been dazzled by his words, been deluded through compassion, through recklessness, through desire, into throwing herself away upon a man who cared nothing for her, who had no affection, no human kindness. He didn’t care what happened to her. If she had been willing to stay with him a little longer, he would have been willing to “love” her a little longer; but when she had decided to leave him, he offered no resistance. He would quite easily forget her, she knew.

Useless to tell herself that the conventional code of morality meant nothing to her. It did! She had fancied herself superior to all that, but that was because she hadn’t known or imagined what such a surrender meant. Just to run into his arms, without ceremony, without any promise, any covenant, without regard for any other human creature, reckless of her own future, flinging away her pride, her freedom, her decency. That wasn’t beautiful. That wasn’t love. What in God’s name was it?

She had not even happy memories. It was shame to remember her past joy. She loathed herself for her past ecstasy. A perfect terror of her own infamy swept over her.

"No!" she cried. "I can't stand it! Mommer, it's too awful! You don't know how awful! You don't know what I did!"

"Why don't you tell me, deary?"

"I can't! I don't know how. I'll try." She sat up in bed and caught her mother's hand. "The worst is the way I treated Eddie. He was so good to me! He asked me to marry him, and I said I would; and then, the very day he left, I went away—with his own brother!"

"Oh, Angie!" cried her mother, in horror.

"Oh, mommer, if you knew Eddie, you'd see what an awful thing I've done! He's such a *good* man, and so—kind of noble, and all that! I don't know how he'll ever stand it. He trusted me."

"But what ever made you do such a thing, Angelica? Are you so terrible fond of this other one?"

"No—not now. No—that's what I can't explain. I don't know why I did. I—I just seemed to forget everything. I—just thought—I loved him."

"And you don't? You love the other one—the good one?"

Angelica began to weep.

"No," she said. "That's the worst. I don't love either of 'em. What's the matter with me, do you suppose? I don't seem to have any heart!" She struggled painfully to get her thought into words. "I hate Vincent, and I like Eddie, a lot; but love—I've never felt it at all, mommer, for any one," she sobbed. "Not that love they have in books. It makes me feel dreadful. If I loved Vincent, I wouldn't feel so mean and low and bad. It would be—sort of splendid; but this! Mommer!"

"Well, deary?"

"Maybe there's no such a thing."

"No such a thing as what?"

“As love.”

Mrs. Kennedy had never experienced it; had never seen or heard of any authentic case of this beautiful tenderness, this undying devotion, this heavenly thing. Yet she firmly believed that it existed—this love which was not desire, not infatuation, not madness, not sentimentality, not friendship—this ecstasy which endured forever. Not experience, not common sense, nothing at all could have convinced her, for it was instinct that made her believe—nature’s most cruel and most necessary deception. For life to continue, it is necessary that women shall cling to two lies—that men are capable of truly loving them, and that their children will love them in their old age.

“Deary,” said Mrs. Kennedy, “I think you’d better write to him and tell him, and see what he will do for you. Perhaps he’ll marry you.”

“He is married,” said Angelica indifferently. “Yes, mommer, I will write to him; but it’s an even chance if he’ll come or not. He’s queer. You can’t ever tell, with him. I’ll try, anyway, and see if I can’t get some money out of him.”

To her mother the tragedy was somewhat lessened by the fact that Angelica didn’t love Vincent. She fancied that the girl would consequently get over it better, not suffer so cruelly; but for Angelica there lay the worst of it, the most intolerable part to bear. It was that that made her frantic with shame and remorse. She looked in vain; she could find no trace of magnificence in her downfall. It wasn’t a splendid sin, done for reckless love. It was a damnable folly, committed through reckless ignorance.

II

She wrote to Vincent with a sort of naïve art. She wished to hide the least sign of anxiety or reproach; she wished him merely to think that she missed him.

Why don't you come? I have been looking for you for ever so long. Come in some evening soon.

ANGELICA.

The evening after the letter was mailed, she got up and dressed herself, trembling with weakness, hardly able to stand, but quite self-possessed. She didn't feel the slightest emotion at the prospect of seeing Vincent again—nothing but a dogged resolution to make him give her money.

She attempted no attitude, made no plan of what she would say to him, because she knew now how helpless she was in his hands. *He* would direct the interview; *he* would give the key-note; it would all depend upon his mood. She couldn't influence him. She didn't even take pains with her appearance, for she knew that it didn't lie with her to move him. It depended upon the condition of his own mysterious soul.

She had hardly expected him so soon. He came that same evening, but, from the very sound of his footsteps as he followed her along the hall to the tiny parlour, she could feel that he was sullen and reluctant, and her heart sank.

"Oh, if only I didn't have to bother with him!" she thought. "If only I didn't have to see him ever again! And I've got to be nice to him and ask him for money!"

They entered the parlour, and sat down in silence.

"Angelica!" he said abruptly, with a frown. "Why did you leave me?"

"I wanted to——"

"I was amazed. I was *shocked*. You behaved——" He hesitated for a moment, then went on severely: "You behaved like a light woman. I thought you were faithful and constant and sincere; and then, after *one week*——"

"But what kind of a week was it?" cried Angelica.

"I'm not a rich man, but I did the best I could for you."

"You know what I mean! In that awful little road-house, with you shutting yourself up in the bedroom all the time and leaving me there alone for all those men to laugh at!"

"I had to write."

"You hadn't any business to write. You might have thought a little bit how I'd feel. If you couldn't pay any attention to me, you shouldn't——"

"Did you bring me here to reproach me?" he demanded. "Because if you did, I've had enough."

"No, I didn't mean to scold you," she answered, hurriedly, recalled to the necessity for placating him. "No—I just wanted to see you."

Her face, which had become so pinched, so colourless, was covered with a vivid flush. The conciliatory words almost stuck in her throat; but apparently Vincent 'didn't observe her emotion.

"I'm not disposed to endure much more from you—upon my word, I'm not!" he went on. "The way you went off, simply leaving me a note to say that you thought you'd go home—making a fool of me! I was naïve enough to imagine we were to spend our lives together. I thought we'd stay for a month or so in that beautiful little mountain inn, fishing, tramping, reading, talking——"

"You hardly spoke to me all day long. I had to sit downstairs in the dining-room with those fishermen."

"How was I to know that you had no resources? Besides, it was rainy, and we couldn't have gone out, anyway; but the very day you left the weather cleared. I was really disgusted with you, Angelica. You behaved abominably!"

"Well, Vincent," she said, "you'll have to excuse that, and be a good friend to me, because I need some money."

He jumped to his feet.

"You're shameless!" he said. "I'm shocked!"

"No—listen! There's going to be a baby!" she cried, in desperation.

He was a little taken aback for a moment. He gave a hasty glance at her poor desperate young face, and then looked away.

"There!" he said, taking a leather wallet out of his pocket

and throwing it on the table. "Take it! It's all I've got. My God, you can't get the better of a woman! They have it all their own way in this world. They make us pay, and pay dear, for their follies!"

Angelica stared at him, astounded.

"*I'm* supposed to be the guilty one," he went on. "*I'm* the one who's held responsible—why, the good Lord only knows. *I'm* the one to pay!"

"As for *me*," said Angelica, "it's just a picnic, isn't it?"

"You're fulfilling your natural destiny—at my expense."

"Oh!" she cried. "I wish to God I could throw the money back in your face, Vincent!"

"But you won't. And now that you've got all that you can out of me, I suppose I can go?"

But Angelica was weak; she couldn't endure it.

"Do you mean that you're not even sorry?" she cried. "Can't you think what this means to me—what's going to become of me? Oh, Vincent, just *think* what's before me!"

"Just what always was before you. You're bad, my girl, through and through. You couldn't have ended any other way. No decency, no self-restraint. I don't suppose I was the first man——"

"Oh, don't!" she cried. "Don't! You can't realize—oh, Vincent!"

"And as for *this*, it isn't the first time such a thing has happened in the world. Even a young girl brought up in sheltered luxury, like you, must have heard of such things. In fact, my dear, you must have known quite as well as I what the consequences of our adventure might be. If you say you didn't, you're lying."

She put out one hand in a sort of mute and feeble protest.

"But I didn't think—you'd change——" Her voice faltered; she found it almost impossible to go on. "I thought—that you—felt like I did."

"So I did," he answered. "So I do—just the same as you. Our impulses, our reasons for going off together, were

exactly the same, only I'm honest about it and you're not. You pretend to be heart-broken because I don't care for you any longer, when, as a matter of fact, you don't care a bit more for me. You're an utter hypocrite!"

She was confused and crushed by his words. He was taking away from her her very last support—her conviction that she had been misled, wronged, sinned against. Somehow he was putting her in the wrong. She couldn't deny that she had gone away with him of her own free will; and yet she knew that it *hadn't* been her own free will. She didn't deny her own guilt, but she knew that his was far greater.

"I'm not a hypocrite," she said.

"Then you're a fool. No—we've done with each other, Angelica. It's over for both of us."

"But it isn't over for me!" she cried. Her heart was flaming with resentment against the hellish injustice of it—that she should have all the suffering, all the punishment. "Just *think* of it!" she cried. "Can't you realize, Vincent, how dreadful it is for me?"

"No, I can't realize. I'm not a woman, and I don't pretend to understand them and their fine feelings. I can't understand or sympathize with this cowardly whining over physical effects which are known to every one. Did you want anything else from me, except money, Angelica?"

"Yes, I do!" she answered. "I do want something else, and I'll get it, too. I want to make you suffer, and I will, too!"

"Oh, I see—the wronged woman with the baby in her arms! Well, Angelica, go ahead! Do your worst. I don't think you can hurt me very much."

He looked down at her with a gay, mocking smile, he put on his hat, and was gone.

Angelica went back to her mother with the wallet.

"Well!" she began. "Here's——" But she broke down and began to cry wildly.

"Oh, mommer! Mommer! I can't bear this! I *can't* be treated like this! Oh, mommer, not *me!* Not *me!* It can't be true!"

Her mother was glad when she wept. She stroked Angelica's head in silence, pleased to see her softened, even humbled, happy to see that ferocious hardness gone; not suspecting that that ferocity and that hardness were the very best of Angelica, the very spirit of her. When she wept like this, she was submerged, perishing, *going under*. With a frightful effort she saved herself and rose above these bitter waters.

"He'll *pay*, all right!" she said, looking up with an odd, horrible grin. "You watch!"

"Don't talk so, my deary!"

"Here—take it! Let's see how much we've got to go on with," she interrupted, pushing the wallet across the table. "He's always saying he hasn't got a cent, but I notice he always finds plenty for anything he wants. God knows where he gets it, but he does."

Her mother counted what was in the purse, and turned to Angelica with a look of amazement.

"Why, Angie! There's only four dollars here!"

Angelica laughed.

"It's all we'll get, anyway, mommer," she said. "It'll have to do."

CHAPTER THREE

I

Behold Mrs. Kennedy answering an advertisement for a janitress, far over on the lower West Side, in the Chelsea district.

"I have the best of references," she told Mr. Steinberg, the landlord. "I've been where I am now for twelve years, and no complaints."

"Den vy do you leaf?"

"I don't like living 'way up there," she answered calmly. "I've got more friends down around here. And my married daughter's coming to live with me, and she'd rather be down here. She's real lonely, now her husband's gone to the war."

This was her ruse to preserve that respectability which no one valued or even observed.

She got the place, because of her decency and her references. There was nothing to be said against her in any quarter. What is more, Mr. Steinberg felt from the look of her that she was a hard worker. Like her other place, it was a "cold water" flat; there was a man to look after the furnace, but everything else was to be done by her, for her rent and an incredibly small stipend. She agreed. Her sole asset was her readiness to undertake hard and unremitting labour. There was not a thing which she could do better than the average woman, so that her boast, her credit, must be that she did *more*.

"My married daughter's thinking of taking in sewing," she said. "Maybe you could put a little work in her way."

"Ve'll see," said Mr. Steinberg, "later on, maybe."

Now that she had secured a refuge, where Angelica might assume respectability among complete strangers, the poor woman's next preoccupation was to find some way of having her pitiful furniture moved. She went about for days, trying to drive bargains with any one who possessed a cart; but war-time prices and conditions prevailed, and no one cared to accept so unprofitable a task.

In the end she found an Italian who sold ice, coal, and wood in a near-by cellar, and who agreed to do what she wished. She paid him at least six visits, trying to persuade him to take less money, or to promise great care with her scanty belongings, or to reassure herself that he really understood the new address. In order to pay him and to settle her few little bills, she was obliged to sell her parlour furniture, blue lamp and all.

Winter was beginning to set in when they moved. It was a raw and bitter day, blankly gray overhead. Mrs. Kennedy lingered in the old flat where she had lived for twelve years, watching the Italian carry out her things, her heart sick with shame to be leaving the place in this fashion, her parlour furniture sold, her daughter "in trouble." There was nothing left now but the barest essentials—things to sleep on, to be covered with, to cook with, and a chair or two.

Angelica had gone by surface-car to the new home, to await the arrival of the cart. For the moment each of them was alone in a dismal bare flat, hopelessly similar. It was a day of gloom. The removal had brought home to them most forcibly their desperate position, their helplessness, their desolation. They had only each other—no other friend, no other resource.

They set to work at once, in the dusk, to arrange their furniture; and when a barren sort of order had been achieved, Mrs. Kennedy went out in search of the usual little shop where she might buy a bite for Angelica's supper. She tried her best to be calm, resolute, strong; but her heart

was like lead as she hurried through the unfamiliar streets, chilled by a cold wind from the river, and by a far colder and bleaker apprehension.

She caught sight of a brightly lighted little grocery-store, and she went in. Another pang! Here she was no one; simply a poorly dressed stranger with a paltry handful of change. She remembered her own cheerful young grocer with positive anguish. It was almost the last straw.

She came back, half running, with her little bag under her arm, entered the strange doorway, rang the strange bell. Her daughter admitted her.

"I didn't do much," Angelica said. "I started to scrub the shelves, but I felt tired. Anyway, what does it matter?"

She had been sitting in a dreadful apathy in the forlorn kitchen; she sank down again on the old step-ladder chair.

"If only I had a bit of linoleum for the floor!" began Mrs. Kennedy, looking down at the filthy boards. "A nice check pattern, like Mrs. Stone had——"

Angelica stopped her.

"I prayed," she said.

"Oh, my deary! I'm so glad. God'll hear you and——"

"I prayed it would die."

"*Angie!*"

"You didn't think I wanted it, did you?"

"You'll feel different when it's here."

"I sha'n't. Lots of people don't. It's a curse to me, a *curse!* A baby—me with a living to earn the rest of my life! No—I'll hate it. I do now. I'd have to hate any child with *his* blood in it. I hope it'll die!"

"That's a wicked, wicked thing to say, Angie."

"Maybe you'd be surprised to know how wicked I feel. My Gaw'd, what I've done! The chance I've thrown away!"

"That's not like you, my deary."

"*I'm* not like me—not like the me I thought I was. I thought I was—oh, I don't know—kind of a wonder; and

after all, I'm nothing but—this. Going to have a baby—pretending to be married—not a cent! It's a grand end, all right!"

"End, Angie?"

"Yes, end. I'm done—finished!"

II

Not her suffering, though. That had just begun. 'All that winter and through the spring she lived in a misery without relief or solace. She could think of nothing in all the universe but her own torment. She was ashamed to go out, in spite of her mother's account of her as a married daughter with a husband gone to war, in spite of the wedding-ring the poor embarrassed woman had bought for her at the ten-cent store. She felt that she had in no way the appearance of a young wife. She felt herself to be obviously and flagrantly an outcast.

She was ill, too, and so hopeless, so profoundly dejected, that she saw no sense in getting up. She lay on her cot in the bedroom, dark as the former one, day after day. Now and then a bit of sewing was brought to her to do, and then she would drag herself into the kitchen and sit by the window, where there was a little more light, until the work was done. Otherwise she simply lay there, her black hair uncombed, an old shawl about her shoulders, in fathomless despair.

Life was too ghastly to contemplate. She could see nothing before her worth living for. Vincent was gone, and with him love and youth; Eddie was gone, and with him security and hope. Whether the baby lived or died, she was disgraced. She could never, never forget that she had been cast aside.

They were bitterly poor, and seldom had enough to eat. There was nothing to relieve their monotonous pain and anxiety; not a neighbour to exchange a word with, not a bit

of gossip to amuse them—nothing, nothing, nothing, from morning till night but their own sad faces, their own listless voices, their own leaden hearts, their own undying apprehension.

“It ’ll all seem different, deary, when you’re well again,” Mrs. Kennedy told her child. “Then you’ll go to work again, and we won’t be so pinched. You’ll go back to the factory and see your friends, and go out, like you used to, to the movies, and dances.”

“I won’t. There’ll be a child to look after and feed. Just to work in a factory till I’m too old, and then—I don’t know—die in the poorhouse, I guess!”

“There’s lots of things might happen, Angie. Maybe you’ll marry. There’s men that would be willing to overlook——”

“Well, I don’t want ’em. I’m through with men.”

“Then maybe you’ll get on fine in some kind of business.”

“No chance of that! I haven’t any education. I’m too ignorant. Don’t try to make up things to comfort me; I know how it ’ll be.”

But still she didn’t, she couldn’t, want to die. No matter how terrible her future looked, her strong spirit clung to life, even the most repulsive life. It wasn’t that she feared death, but she resented it. It was the complete defeat, the final outrage.

As her time drew near, she began greatly to dread dying. She would lie by the hour, thinking of death, in a sort of silent fury.

III

At last it came upon her, one July morning, that most shocking and insensate of nature’s cruelties. Her mother sat by her in fatalistic patience, knowing well that there was no escape, no alleviation. There was a doctor whom Mrs.

Kennedy had summoned—not the noble and kindly physician of Angelica's romance, but an indifferent and callous one accustomed to the poor and their profitless agonies. He was very cheerful. He was able to look down upon that young face distorted in brutal anguish, and smile.

“Nothing to be done now,” he said. “I'll look in again in an hour or so.”

He returned too late. The protesting little spirit had entered the world without him, and lay crying, wrapped in an old flannel night-dress, in Mrs. Kennedy's lap, while the young mother watched it with unfathomable eyes.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

Angelica sat at the kitchen table, her blouse torn rudely open at the neck, wet through with perspiration, haggard and worn almost beyond recognition.

“My Gawd!” she said, pushing back her hair. “It’s hot as hell, mommer!”

Mrs. Kennedy sighed, without speaking or interrupting her work. She was standing at the ironing-board, finishing a big week’s washing. It was a night of intolerable and sultry heat, and the kitchen, with the stove lighted for the irons, and the gas blazing for light, was a place of torment. The two women were curiously pallid, curiously alert, with the terrible activity of exhaustion. They had reached so high a point of suffering, both physical and mental, on that night, that they were no longer aware of their pain.

“Listen, mommer!” said Angelica. “Here’s what I’ve written.”

She picked up the sheet of soft paper with blue lines, on which the ink blurred and the pen dug and scratched, and on which she had written:

VINCENT:

The baby has been sick all the time, and now he is worse. You got to send some money for him. You got to find it somewhere if you have not got it. He is in a terrible bad state. He only weighs six pounds, and he is going on for six weeks.

ANGELICA.

She read it in her hoarse, thrilling voice, and it sounded so vehement, so passionate, so touching, that they both believed the letter to be so in itself.

"Now I'll run out and mail it," she said.

Just as she was, with disheveled hair and unfastened blouse, she hurried out into the street. A man spoke to her, and she swore at him.

She was back within a few minutes, panting, but her mother was no longer in the kitchen; she had gone into the dark bedroom to quiet the poor little baby.

"I'll hold him, Angie," she said. "You can go on ironing."

But Angelica flung herself on her knees before the child on her mother's lap.

"Gawd! Little feller! Little love! Gawd, I wish he'd die and be out of this!"

Her mother could not rebuke her. Worn out by unending worry, by lack of sleep, by the heat, by intolerable toil for the tiny thing, she, too, could only wish it dead. It suffered so; it was so weak, so pitiful.

Night after night they had held it in their arms, close to the window, where it might get what air there was. They sang to it, rocked it, bathed its wasted little body to cool it, and all the while it wailed in its feeble voice—a weak, monotonous, heart-rending sound. They tended it by day and by night. From time to time it slept, but fitfully, the beating of its little heart shaking its emaciated body.

Angelica would sit beside it, her eyes fixed upon it, scarcely daring to breathe in her terror that it might die as it slept; for though she said and she meant that she wished it to die and be free of its misery, for her own sake she longed for it to live to the utmost limit, no matter if every day and every night were a pain to her, and her whole life went by in its service. She wanted to be holding it in her arms every waking hour; she could not sleep unless it lay within the reach of her hand. Even if she went to the corner on an errand for her mother, she was filled with panic until she had got back to it, and had seen it and touched it again.

She cared for nothing else whatever. She didn't trouble

to dress herself decently; she no longer helped her mother about the flat. Barefooted, her heavy hair pinned in a great slovenly coil, her blouse unfastened, with a ragged skirt hanging about her lean hips, she would sit for hours with the little wailing thing in her arms, pressed against her bosom, while she sang to it in her hoarse, touching voice.

She learned all she could from the doctor and the visiting nurse, and did just as they had told her. She bathed the child, fed it, tended it, in the most careful and professional way; but she would not let it alone. The doctor told her to leave it in the clothes-basket which was its bed, and the nurse assured her it would be cooler and more comfortable there; but she could not restrain herself from snatching it up. She could not help feeling that the passion of her love, the generous warmth of her body, must invigorate and vitalize it. Most cruel of all delusions—that love can save!

II

“He’s got to get into the country,” said Angelica. “That’s all there is to it. I’d send him to one of these fresh-air places, only I know he’d die without me. He’s got to have me. No one else would know his ways.”

“Well, if Mr. Geraldine sends——”

“If! If! If he don’t, I’ll—— He’s got to, that’s all. I’ll give him just one day more, and then——”

“Maybe he’s not there. Maybe he’s gone to the war.”

“Not a chance! Well, if he’s not there, I’ll have to find him, and I will.”

There was no letter the next day.

“You got to telephone,” said Angelica to her mother, “and find out if he still lives there at Buena Vista. If he does, I’ll write once more.”

Her mother came in late that afternoon.

"He's there," she said. "Somebody—one of the servants, I dare say—came to the telephone, and I just said, 'Is Mr. Vincent Geraldine there?' And she said, 'Who is it wants to speak to him?' And I said, 'I only wanted to know was he at home.' 'Oh, yes!' she says. 'He's at home!'"

Poor woman, lugging her eternal bucket! She looked as if she were being pressed down by giant hands which were forcing her exhausted and gallant body to its knees. There was nothing ready for her now, at the end of her bitter day—nothing in the house which she could cook for supper. Her bed was still unmade, there wasn't even a decent place for her to sit down, for Angelica occupied the only rocking-chair, drawn up close to the window, where the baby could get what air there was.

Mrs. Kennedy looked at them, and for an instant she hated them both—Angelica who so savagely demanded this unceasing, inhuman toil of her, who took everything and gave nothing, not so much as a loving word, and this wailing, wretched little creature who didn't even know her.

"It's *too much!*" she thought. "I'm getting old."

"Take the baby," said Angelica, "while I write another letter."

"I'll get some supper first."

"No! I've got to write now."

"Then put the kettle on, so's we can have a cup of tea before long," said her mother, and sat down with the wretched, hot little baby in her arms.

VINCENT:

This child is going to die. You got to help it. If you do not send me some money for him right away, I will go out after you and get it. I don't care if you are hard up. You can get it somewhere, and you got to. This child will die if you don't. ANGELICA.

"Deary," said her mother, "I don't think it's any good."

"It is!" Angelica assured her. "He's got to pay!"

III

An answer came quickly enough. Angelica smiled grimly as she saw the envelope. She and her mother were sitting together over their supper of tinned pork and beans, Mrs. Kennedy eating with one hand while she held the fitfully sleeping baby.

"Now we'll see," said Angelica. "It's always a guess with that feller. You never know what he'll say."

Vincent wrote thus:

ANGELICA:

I would if I could. I am not altogether a brute, a monster. I am not callous to the sufferings of my own child; but I have absolutely nothing. Ever since I had your first letter I have been thinking, trying my utmost to discover some way to help you.

And the only way I can do so is to appeal to Eddie, to tell him the whole story, and to throw ourselves on his mercy. It will be a bitter blow to him, and it is a terrible penance for me to tell him; but, for your sake, I must bear the pain of telling and he of hearing. He will help us, Angelica. He is a generous and noble soul. He has never yet failed me.

She remained stupefied.

"D'ye mean Eddie doesn't know?" she cried, addressing an invisible Vincent.

It was such an amazing idea to her. She had always imagined Eddie as possessed of all the details. She had often thought of him, sitting in his trench in the moonlight, reflecting with grief and bitterness over her infamy. She had looked upon him as utterly lost, beyond her reach. She had believed, as a matter of course, that all those people knew, and despised and hated her—Polly, Mrs. Russell, all the servants.

"Why, mommer!" she cried. "He——"

"Whatever is it, child?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, surprised at the strange look on her daughter's face. Angelica had risen slowly to her feet, and was staring at her mother. A new, a terrible hope was dawning upon her.

"Quick, mommer!" she cried suddenly. "I got to stop him!"

She rushed into the bedroom, put on a hat over her disordered hair, pinned together the open bosom of her blouse, and ran down the hall.

"Angie! Angie!" cried her mother. "Where are you going?"

The door banged. She was gone.

Mrs. Kennedy laid the baby on the bed.

"Cry, if you must," she said. "I can't hold you any more till I've had a cup of tea."

IV

Angelica had gone running up the street to a drug-store on Sixth Avenue, where she knew there was a telephone booth. It was a place of doubtful repute. There was always a group there of young Italian-Americans, flashily dressed youths of immense assurance, who were interested in every woman that entered the store; but they didn't care for Angelica in her slatternly dress, with her fierce and haggard face.

One of them made a coarse jest about her, which she answered with an oath; then she went into the booth and pulled the door to behind her. Her heart was beating frantically; she was scarcely able to speak, her hoarse voice came out with an unfamiliar sound.

"I want to speak to Mr. Vincent!" she said.

"Who is it?"

"Call him quick! It's a message from his brother." A silly ruse, but she was capable of nothing better. Then, after a long pause, she heard his voice.

"What is it?"

"It's me—Angelica. Vincent, don't you *dare* to write to Eddie! Don't you dare ever to let him know!"

"My dear child, I've already done so. I've just put the letter in the box, not ten minutes ago."

"No!" she cried. "No! You must get it back!"

He laughed.

"When once a letter is posted——"

She gave a sort of wail. He was still speaking, but she didn't care what he said. She hung up the receiver and went out into the street again. Somehow this seemed to her the very worst blow that had fallen on her, the greatest cruelty of her destiny. To have got, in the blackness of her despair, this glorious hope, and to have it destroyed almost before it had breathed!

It occurred to her that there was one more desperate chance. She went hurrying home again.

"Mommer!" she said. "Where's your money?"

"I haven't any money, Angie, as well you know."

"You have!"

"Only just the bit that's to last us through the week."

"Give it to me, quick!"

She snatched up the flat little purse and rushed out again, pushing her hair up under her hat as she ran. She didn't quite know where to look. She sought in vain along Sixth Avenue, then crossed to Fifth, and found there what she wanted—an empty taxicab, cruising along Madison Square.

"Say!" she called. "Taxi!"

The man stopped and looked at her suspiciously. A queer-looking thing she was to hail a cab!

"I want to go out to Baycliff," she said.

"You better walk, then," he said. "It's cheaper."

"Oh, you'll get paid, all right!" said Angelica. "The people out there'll pay you good and give you a tip."

He shook his head.

"I guess not," he said doubtfully. "You better find some one else. I'm married. I can't afford to take no chances. Where'd I be, if I wasn't to get paid? A long run like that, and got to come back empty!"

Angelica recalled something which had been mentioned in one of Mrs. Russell's long stories.

"Look here!" she said. "It's the law. You got to take passengers."

"Not outside the city limits I haven't," said the man.

They were both a little uneasy, as neither of them felt at all sure as to what laws there might or might not be; but Angelica in her desperation was resourceful.

"You let me in," she said, "and I'll fix it up with the people out there. See, I'll give you two dollars now, but I won't tell them I gave you anything, and they'll pay you and give you a tip, too. I'm the waitress out there, and they'll be darned glad to see me back. You didn't ought to worry. You'd ought to know I wouldn't risk getting locked up just for the sake of a ride. No one would take a chance like that."

"Well, they do, all the same," said the driver. "It wouldn't do me no good to get you locked up—not if you didn't have no money."

"It's only people out on a joy ride that do that," said she. "Where'd be the sense in me doing that—taking a ride all alone and then getting locked up?"

He wavered, and she hurriedly got out the two dollars—earned by long hours of scrubbing by Mrs. Kennedy—and gave them to the chauffeur. He was now practically won; her insistence overcame his weak will, her two dollars charmed him. Moreover, he liked her, she was so frank and so much in earnest.

"All right," he said. "Get in! Now mind you treat me fair—I'm taking a big risk for you!"

She was a strange enough figure, sitting there in her dusty clothes, her battered old hat, while the cab sped on, through and out of the city, along dark country roads lined with trees, past fields, past marshes, past desolate buildings, past friendly lighted houses. She was consumed with a fever of haste, burning with anxiety, looking over the driver's shoulders at the road before her, which seemed so endless.

Now they were going up the hill to the house—the very house.

“You wait a while,” she said. “The longer you wait the more you’ll get paid.”

The front door stood open, with only a screen door across the aperture, and a faint light from the hall shone out on the roadway. There didn’t seem to be any one about. She stood outside, peering through the screen into the hall, listening. Not a sound!

She was obliged to ring the bell; and who should open the door but the doctor? He didn’t see who it was until he had let her in; then he was frightened at the unexpectedness of her coming, at the wild disorder of her appearance.

“What do you want?” he asked.

“I want to speak to Vincent,” she answered. “Where is he?”

“He may be busy. I’d better——”

“*Where is he?*” she demanded.

When the doctor didn’t answer, she pushed by him and ran up-stairs.

Vincent was lying back in an armchair, in a bath-robe, his slender bare feet on a second chair. He was eating biscuits and cheese from a plate balanced on his knees, and reading a magazine, in the greatest possible comfort, physical and mental, when without an instant’s warning Angelica entered, wild, savage, relentless as a Fury.

He sat up, drawing the bath-robe tightly about him, and tried to frown at her; but he felt, and he appeared, at a horrible disadvantage.

“What do you want?” he demanded.

She couldn’t speak for a moment. She only looked at him with her fierce black eyes, pressing a hand against her breast, as if to stifle by force the tumult there. He was alarmed, really, although he tried so desperately to look scornful.

“Well?” he asked again. “What did you come here for?”

"That letter!" she said. "That letter to Eddie! You shan't send it!"

"I have," he answered.

"No!" she cried. "No! You haven't."

"I tell you I have!" he answered definitely. "I told you so over the telephone."

She stood motionless, staring past him, oblivious of his uneasy bewilderment. Thoughts were running through her brain like fire through parched grass. She remembered things she had heard—of the English suffragettes pouring acid into mail-boxes to destroy their contents. But what did they use, and where to get it?

Her vigorous and subtle brain was never quite without resource. She thought and thought, with passionate intensity, and at last, suddenly, an idea came to her. She went out of the room abruptly, so swiftly and silently that Vincent was astonished and more than ever alarmed. What in Heaven's name was that damnable girl up to now? He knew she wouldn't stop at anything.

He went on tiptoe to the door and peered cautiously out into the hall. She wasn't there. Where was she? He was certain that she hadn't given up and gone away. She was after that letter, and she wouldn't go without it.

"She's ill, though," he muttered. "Beastly—savage! Forcing her way in like this! My God, I'll *never* be rid of her! What the devil was the matter with me, to get mixed up with a girl like that? I wish she'd break her neck. I wish I had the courage to wring it!"

He stopped suddenly and turned pale; for there on the mantelpiece, before his eyes, was the letter. Courtland had forgotten to mail it!

He flew at it and tore it into bits, like a criminal concealing some trace of his guilt. He was actually capable of imagining that, by this, he had got the better of Angelica.

V

Angelica ran down-stairs to the kitchen, which was deserted, but quite brightly lighted. There, on the back of the coal range, stood what she had expected to see—the teakettle, gently steaming.

She lifted it, and went to the back door. There was a couple—probably Annie and her young man—sitting in the dark on the steps. She turned back, went through the laundry and out of a side door; down the hill, through the grass, where she wouldn't make a sound. Once she stumbled, and a few drops of scalding water spilled upon her instep. She smothered a shriek of pain, and hurried on.

There wasn't a soul in sight; the road was quite empty even of passing motors. She crossed to the other side, where the post-box stood, and, raising herself on tiptoe, she poured into it the entire contents of the kettle.

Then she ran into the woods behind the box, and hid the kettle in a clump of thick bushes. She was satisfied that the letter must be destroyed, together with anything else the box may have contained. Her conscience did not reproach her in the least for this possible injury to others.

"There couldn't be any one," she reflected, "who could want any one else to get a letter as much as I *don't* want Eddie to get that one!"

VI

She rang the front door-bell again, but this time the doctor didn't let her in. He looked at her through the screen door and shook his head.

"No!" he said softly. "Better go away. Don't make any disturbance, for your own sake."

"I only want to speak to Vincent," she said, plaintively.

"Better not. Go away now. Nobody's seen you. Vin-

cent and I are alone in the house. I'll never mention it. I'm your friend, you know; and you must be my friend if I need one, won't you?"

He had heard rumours, which he didn't quite believe, that Eddie was to marry this remarkable young woman. He knew that Eddie was capable of extraordinarily quixotic deeds, and he thought it just as well to have a friend at court, in case—— Moreover, he liked Angelica, and was well disposed toward her. The rebuffs he had received, rude as they had been, hadn't either hurt or discouraged him. The Lord who had made him so vulnerable to the charms of the fair sex had likewise provided him with a sort of protective armour.

"Of course I'll be your friend," said Angelica; "but I just must speak to Vincent."

"I thought you had seen him," said the doctor. "You went up-stairs."

"I forgot to tell him something very important. If you don't want me to come, just make him come down here—please!"

She knew how to be meek enough to serve her ends.

"Please!" she said again, with all her cajolery. "Please, doctor! Just get him to come down and speak to me through the door—just for an instant!"

He hesitated.

"I want to do anything I can for you——"

"And wouldn't you please just pay that cab?" she said. "I'm afraid he'll wait till you do."

He had a little money on hand, as it happened, and he was proud to be able to play so gallant a rôle.

"With pleasure!" he said. "But then won't you agree to postpone your talk with Vincent?"

"I can't!" she cried, piteously. "Oh, do please get him down!"

"Very well," he said, with a sigh and a smile.

She waited patiently, close to the screen. Everything was

quiet. The waiting chauffeur had shut off his engine and sat on the step of his cab, smoking. Far away, from some other house, came the thumping rhythm of a piano-player, and quite close to her the busy chirping of little nocturnal insects.

Before very long, Vincent's heavy tread sounded on the stairs. His big body loomed up in the dim light of the hall, and drew near to her; but he did not unlock the door. She suppressed a smile. He was afraid of her—that big, masterful poet, forever proclaiming himself a *man!*

"Well!" he demanded, sternly, of the girl outside.

"I spoiled your letter," she said. "Eddie 'll never get it."

"What? I'll write another——"

"You'd better not do that, Vincent. He wouldn't be pleased with the way you've acted."

"Perhaps not; but it's my duty——"

"Don't any of them know? Not your mother or any one?"

"Of course not. I'm not the sort to tell such a thing. If it wasn't my duty now, I wouldn't."

"I thought it was to get money to help me out."

"Well—yes, partly; but he really ought to know, in case he still thinks of marrying you."

"No," she said quietly. "He mustn't know. Look here, Vincent! I've done this one bad thing in my life. I never did anything bad before, and I never will again; but if it was known, I'd never be forgiven. I'd never get another chance—from any one; and I mean to have another chance. It's never going to be known. I'm not going to be ruined and wasted, just for one—badness. It's going to be wiped out, I tell you!"

"It will never be wiped out. You'll never forget, Angelica—you'll never, never forget me. You can't love again. You've lost heaven, my girl."

She was still for a moment.

"Maybe I have," she said. "Maybe I have lost heaven. But," she went on, "I'll get what I can, anyway. I'm going to have my chance. Vincent!"

Her voice was so low that he had to press against the screen to hear her; and her words came in an incredibly ferocious whisper, that turned his blood cold:

“If ever you tell him, Vincent, I swear to Gawd I’ll kill you!”

CHAPTER FIVE

I

Through the front basement window Mrs. Kennedy saw Angelica returning, a shockingly disheveled figure in the sweltering midday heat. She hurried to the door, with the baby in her arms.

"Oh, Angie!" she cried. "You cruel, cruel, bad girl! Where have you been? I've been near crazy, left alone here all night and morning with the baby, and not a penny in the house. Of course I couldn't do my work——"

"Hush!" said Angelica, sternly. "Don't bother me. I'm too tired. I had to walk all the way back. Make me some tea!"

She took the child in her arms and sat down in the rocking-chair, holding it pressed against her breast and staring over its head, indifferent to its crying, and the feeble beating of its little hands.

She had her tea and bread with it; then she lay down on her cot, always with the child in her arms, and fell asleep. Mrs. Kennedy looked in upon them, saw them both quiet, the little, downy head resting against Angelica's shoulder, and she devoutly hoped that this period of rest might solace her daughter after whatever demoniacal adventure she had undergone that night. She picked up her pail and went out to work.

When she came in again at five o'clock, they were both gone.

II

Polly was reading, stretched out on the sofa of her charming little room, near the window which gave her a fine view

of the Hudson and a cool breeze. Her maid had gone out, and she was quite alone in her little flat, content and languid, rejoicing in her dignified solitude.

Here she was living as she liked to live, with her music, her books, her very few and very casual friends, and long, long hours of delicate idleness. She enjoyed the blissful serenity of a convalescent, or a freed prisoner. After her two heart-breaking experiences of married life, after the anguish of her dear child's death, she was happy now to be quite alone, to love no one, and to be hurt by no one. She wished to spend the rest of her life alone.

Eddie had arranged her affairs so that she once more received her decent little income. She didn't enquire as to how he had done this. She suspected that for the present it must be coming direct from his pocket, but she preferred not to know.

She had a vague intention of some day divorcing Vincent, but she was never capable of action without some spur. There wasn't any cause now. She was rid of him, and she had her money again. Her deepest instinct—the instinct of a woman by temperament unfitted to make her own way in the world—caused her to value her money above anything. It meant all that was desirable in life—ease, dignity, and freedom.

How happy she was in her loose, fresh white wrapper, looking so much younger, so much more charming—smoking her thin little cigarettes and reading some book which entirely engaged her attention—agreeably conscious, none the less, of a nice little supper left by her devoted servant in the ice-box! It was only half-past five, but she was growing hungry, and she was dallying with this idea of supper, when the door-bell rang.

This was startling, for the boy in the hall down-stairs was supposed to stop intruders and to telephone up to her before admitting them. And so loud a ring!

Again! She got up and opened the door.

She gasped at the spectacle of Angelica with a baby in her arms.

"My *dear* Angelica!" she cried. "I never——"

"Let me sit down," said Angelica. "I'm dead tired."

So she came into Polly's tranquil sitting-room, as out of place there as a wild animal—the fierce, rough Angelica with her wailing baby. She sat down on the sofa and held the child up—a wretched, frail little creature, with a wizen, troubled face.

"See him? Two months old."

"He's sweet. But, my dear, I didn't know you were married."

"I'm not married. Listen, Mrs. Geraldine! I got to have a talk with you."

"Of course! But, my dear, isn't there something you could do for your baby? He seems so——"

"He's sick. He's sick all the time; but the doctor says if he gets good care, there's no reason why he shouldn't grow up strong and all right. It does make him kind of an extra trouble now, but after you've had him here a few months, Mrs. Geraldine——"

"*I've* had him *here!*"

"Listen!" cried Angelica, in anguish. "Please, please, Mrs. Geraldine, don't say no! Wait till you hear. Wait till you think. Think about that baby you lost. Oh, do, for Gawd's sake, Mrs. Geraldine, take this baby!"

"My dear girl!" cried Polly. "You must be mad! What in the world are you talking about?"

"Oh, please, please, please, for Gawd's sake! Just think of the poor little feller you lost. Take this one instead. I *can't* keep him, Mrs. Geraldine. He'll only die. You're too good and kind to let a little baby die. You *got* to take him. You'll never have a moment's peace, night or day, if you don't!"

"But, Angelica, it's outrageous!"

"I don't know the words to use. I don't know how to

make you. Oh, Mrs. Geraldine, I can only just beg and pray to you to take him!"

"My dear, I'll help you, if I can. I'll be glad to lend you money, or help you in any other way."

"No—I can't keep him. You see, Mrs. Geraldine, I'm going to marry Eddie, and I can't ever let him know about this."

"Angelica!" cried Polly, aghast. "I certainly won't help you to deceive Eddie."

"I know; but it would be much, much worse to tell him. He's crazy about me, and I can make him happy. This is the only wrong thing I've ever done, *ever*, and I'm never going to do another. I'm going to be good as gold, Mrs. Geraldine. If Eddie knew, he'd never forgive me. I'd never get a chance to be good. That's why I came to you. On account of Eddie, won't you do it to make him happy?"

"I could *not* deceive Eddie."

"Oh, *why* not? Why, for Gawd's sake, tell the truth and spoil Eddie's life, and be the death of this poor little feller and the ruin of me? Oh, just take him! Take him!" she cried, tears running down her cheeks. "You'll love him. You'll be awful glad to feel him next to you in bed, first thing in the morning. You'll love him so. You're the only one I know in the world that I wouldn't mind leaving him with. I know he cries an awful lot, but that's because he's sick; and if you take him, and he has the best of everything, he'll soon be fat and well, and you'll be proud of him. Oh, say you will!"

Tears stood in Polly's eyes.

"My dear, you mustn't give up your child. I'll help you, so that you can keep him."

"No, no! I can't! I'm going to marry Eddie."

"Give up the idea. Go off somewhere and live quietly with your dear little baby."

"No! You can't support me and him both. It would just be me and mommer over again—me going out by the day to

keep him alive, and the two of us having nothing—no chances, no nothing. That's if he'd even live. No; the only, only thing is for you to take him."

"But, Angelica, what in the world would I do with him?"

"Get a good nurse. I'll find one, if you want, from a hospital."

"But what would people say?"

"Say he's yours. No one would know the difference. Tell Eddie he's yours. Tell Vincent, too."

"Vincent wouldn't believe it."

"Well, he could say so, anyway. My Gawd, that's little enough to do for the poor little feller!"

"It's not a little thing, Angelica—it's a great 'deal, to expect Vincent to say he is your child's father."

"Well, he is!" said Angelica. "I forgot to tell you that."

CHAPTER SIX

I

"It seems to be my fate," said Polly to herself, "to be always forgiving and benefiting those that despitefully use me. Imagine me taking this child—Vincent's child—and not feeling the least resentment toward Angelica. I'm only sorry for her."

She was watching the baby lying on the lap of a lively and capable young nurse, whom she had got by telephone.

"I'm going to adopt this child," she had explained to the young woman. "His mother can't keep him."

"It's a risk," said the nurse. "You never know how they'll turn out; but he's a pretty little fellow—big gray eyes and all. He's been badly fed, but I guess we can build him up."

Polly lapsed into a strange, an inexpressible mood. Vincent's baby! Wasn't it really sent to her to take the place of the one she had so cruelly lost? She certainly didn't intend to pass the child off as her own, but she would adopt it and bring it up. She would love it. The starved and thwarted love which no one else wanted welled up in her heart.

"He'll be a lot of trouble to you," said the nurse, looking about the orderly, pretty little place. "You certainly are good to take such a burden on yourself."

"I lost a little child of my own," said Polly.

And a dreadful pity for herself, and for Angelica, came over her.

She might well be sorry for Angelica, going out of the house without that little burden in her arms.

This was the supreme hour of Angelica's punishment—

the inhuman struggle between her heart and her brain. She did not look upon it as a punishment, however; she looked upon this horrible renunciation of her child as a part of the price she was obliged to pay for a magnificent future. She was bent, resolute, with all the savage resolution of her lawless soul, to marry Eddie and to obtain all that she so desired. If she must sacrifice her child, then she would do so, though it left a wound never to be healed.

She didn't seek for happiness; if it had been that she wanted, she would have kept her little baby. She was ready and willing to give up happiness for success. She wished to vindicate herself, to give proof to the world of the power which she knew to be within herself.

Oh, to be going home alone, with empty arms! It was too cruel! She longed for the feel of that little body, for the sound of its feeble voice, for its eyes looking up at her in pain and innocence. She walked through the streets with streaming eyes, running against people, indifferent to abuse or remonstrance.

"I *can't* go home without him!" she gasped. "Oh, my little feller! I can't go home and see his little clothes—and his empty basket!"

She stopped short.

"No!" she said. "I can't do this. I thought I could, but I can't. I got to have him back. I'd rather he died home with me. Oh, I wish we *were* dead, the two of us, dead and buried—him and me in one grave!"

She turned and retraced her long road to Polly's house, as far as the door; but she did not go in.

"No! Him in there with a trained nurse—no! I'll give him his chance, my poor little feller; and I'll give myself a chance, too," she added. She started down-town again; but the nearer she got to home, the more unbearable was the idea of entering there, alone.

"If only I was over this first night!" she moaned. "If I could only just forget him till to-morrow!"

II

Mrs. Kennedy kept on working. She didn't dare to stop, to give herself a moment to think.

They were both gone. Very well! She would simply expect them back, resolutely refusing to think where they had gone, what they might be doing. At five o'clock in the afternoon she began to clean her flat. Then she cooked a nice little supper and set it in the oven to keep warm. She mixed condensed milk and water in a bottle for the baby. She boiled its dirty clothes. Then, in a desperate search for work to do, she found an old pair of white shoes of Angelica's, and began to clean them, singing all the while in a weird, cracked voice:

"Af-ter the ball is o-ver, af-ter the ball is done."

She was trying with all her might to keep out of her head a terrible vision of a young mother standing on a bridge at night, with her baby in her arms.

Still humming, she went into the bedroom, undressed, and got into bed, in a waking nightmare, half hypnotizing herself with her monotonous little song. She was too far gone even to feel relieved when at last she heard Angelica's footsteps in the hall, heard her go into the kitchen and light the gas. Then silence. She lay listening for the baby's cry; there wasn't a sound.

"What can she be doing in there?" she thought. "And what makes the baby so quiet?"

Fear struggled against the lethargy that engulfed her. She got up, went to the kitchen, and stood in the doorway in her long, old-fashioned nightgown, regarding her child. Angelica sat beside the table, with a small box in her lap.

"Angie! Where's the baby?" cried her mother.

"Gone," said Angelica. "I got a lady to take him."

"Your own child?" screamed her mother. "Your own little baby? Oh, shame on you!"

"Shut up! You don't understand. Do you think I liked to give him away?"

"Then get him back! Get him back, Angie! I'll work for him till I drop. Don't give him up!"

"He's gone, I tell you. Let me alone! Can't you see how I feel?"

"Then why, why, why did you do it, Angie?"

Angelica stared at her somberly.

"I don't know," she said. "I had to. I thought it would be the best thing for him. She—the woman that's taken him—she can do a lot for him. She's kind and good. You'd like her."

"Who is she?"

Angelica did not intend to tell. She was too well aware of the preposterousness of having taken Vincent's child to his wife.

"No one you know," she said.

Her mother was completely softened by this new idea, that Angelica had given up her dearly loved child for its own good.

"You poor girl!" she said. "I suppose you meant to do what was best for him. But——"

"I thought it would help me, too," said Angelica. "I couldn't keep him."

Mrs. Kennedy was shocked. She opened her mouth to speak again, but Angelica stopped her with a quick gesture.

"No more!" she said. "I've had enough. Now you better go back to bed."

"I don't want to leave you," said her mother. She could imagine how hideous would be Angelica's loneliness.

"You better!"

"Why? What are you going to do?"

Angelica held up her tiny box.

"Heroin," she said. "I got it off a feller I know. I don't want to think about anything to-night."

For an instant the small figure in the long night-dress

wavered; then, with a pitiful scream, she ran out of the room and cast herself on her bed.

"It's too much, God!" she cried. "I can't bear any more. Take me to-night, oh, merciful God!"

III

Mrs. Kennedy listened in vain all through the night. From time to time she dozed, to wake with a start of fright. She had no knowledge of drugs, only horrible superstitions. She expected Angelica to be changed in some way beyond recognition. Would she be violent—fight and struggle with her? Would she kill herself—set the house on fire?

At dawn she waked from a brief nap, resentful to find herself still alive. Sick with apprehension, weary beyond all measure, she went into the kitchen, to see what had become of her child.

Angelica was asleep, with her head on the table. Beside her lay her tiny package, unopened.

She raised her head and looked at her mother with dark and heavy eyes.

"All right, mommer!" she said. "It's over!"

"What? What's over?"

"All of—of that. I'm going to start all over again."

"You can't, Angie. You can't undo what's done."

"I have," she said solemnly. "I've just wiped it out. I haven't done any harm to any one but myself, and I'm going to forget that. All the traces of it are gone. Eddie 'll never know; and so he'll be happy! I have undone it, mommer; it's just the same now as if *that* had never happened."

Her mother, shivering, racked by her night's anguish, looked sternly at her.

"That's because you don't know," she said. "You don't know yet what you've done!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

Mrs. Kennedy made no preparation for going to work that day. She suffered from a strange, an inexplicable malady. She didn't want to go to bed. She sat upright in a rocking-chair, still in her night-dress, staring at the kitchen wall before her with a faint little frown.

Angelica washed and dressed herself neatly, and got ready some breakfast—not very quickly, for she wasn't accustomed to cooking, but with the care and deftness that were so natural to her. It was, when done, a daintier and better meal than her mother had ever served.

"Now, mommer!" she said. "Come on! Sit down!"

"I can't eat, Angelica."

"You can drink some coffee, anyway."

And she took her mother by the hand and led her to the table—a poor, frail, barefooted little thing, with her gray hair hanging about her haggard face.

"Sit down," said Angelica again. "Now, then!"

Her mother drank a cup of coffee greedily, and gave her familiar little sigh.

"That *was* nice!" she said.

Her daughter succeeded in making her eat a little as well.

"Now you got to lie down," she said.

"I can't. I've got to clean the halls."

"I'll do it, mommer."

"Nonsense, Angelica! You don't know a thing about it."

"I guess I can learn. Go on, mommer, lie down!"

She straightened the bed and patted the thin little pillow.

"Now, mommer, tell me! How do you do it? Where do you start?"

"Angie, I can't let you. You're tired to death, child. I'm more used to it."

But Angelica would not listen to her. She went out, resolutely, with the pail and the cloth and the scrubbing-brush, to do for her mother for one day what her mother had done for her for nineteen years.

It was not Angelica's disposition to enjoy martyrdom. She never felt sorry for herself; she didn't now. It was work which must be done, and she was anxious to do it properly. She was in that state of intense fatigue when one craves more and more physical activity. She scrubbed all the stone stairs, mopped the corridor, went on working and working and thinking and thinking.

She came down-stairs at one o'clock and went out to buy something for lunch.

"What is there to do this afternoon?" she asked.

"Nothing," said Mrs. Kennedy. "I haven't got half the work to do in this place that I had in the old one—only three washings."

"I know. Well, mommer, I suppose we'll have to get some more money from somewhere. I'll go out and look for a job, I guess."

She found one without much trouble. Her sort of job—unskilled, transitory, ill-paid—was plentiful.

"I'm starting in to-morrow morning," she told her mother, when she came home. "Now, if there's any ink, I guess I'll write to Eddie."

"Why?" asked her mother.

"Well, it seems he don't know anything about—what happened, and I guess we'll be married after all."

"You mean to say you're still set on that, Angie?" cried her mother. "It's wicked—downright *wicked*—to deceive a good man so."

"I don't think so," Angelica replied. "What I did was bad enough, but I don't think it's wicked not to tell about it."

If you'd been in prison you wouldn't go around telling every one about it, would you?"

"That isn't the same at all, Angie. I don't want you to tell 'every one'; only the man you're going to marry."

"He wouldn't be the man I'm going to marry very long, if I tell him. He'd never speak to me again. I know Eddie! And he's too good to lose," she added. "Of course, something may go wrong, but I don't think so. I think I've got him!"

So she wrote:

DEAR EDDIE:

I guess you think it is very queer not hearing from me for nearly a year. I did not think I would write to you, because when I thought it over I thought I better not marry you. I thought maybe we could not get on, on account of being so different, but I have changed my mind, and now I will if you still want. Let me know if you feel the same about it, and then I will write again and tell you all about how I am getting along. I have not got any letters from you, because we moved away from the old place, and I was sick a long time, and did not go up there to see if there were any letters, and then when I got well and did go the woman there was very cranky and said she gave them all back to the postman because I did not leave any address behind.

Well, let me hear how you feel about this.

ANGELICA.

"Now!" she said as she dropped it into the box. "Now, if only, *only* I can have my chance!"

II

One might imagine that her mother would be pleased with the new and complete change that came over Angelica—her third phase, so to speak; but she wasn't. This cool, quiet resolution seemed to Mrs. Kennedy more profoundly immoral than all her daughter's past wildness. It would be a horrible thing, it would upset all her universe, if she were forced to see such guilt as Angelica's going undiscovered and forgotten.

Even a sinful life would have seemed to her more hopeful, for it would have presupposed a girl driven to desperation by shame and remorse; but Angelica going off to her work in the morning, neat and alert, her old-time swagger supplanted by a steely self-assurance, was an outrage. She was actually ambitious, too; she didn't seem to know that her life was ruined and ended. She studied in the evening, writing exercises, learning things by heart, going at the English, tongue, spelling, composition, and literature as the books decreed, fiercely concentrated upon her work. She wouldn't go to the movies, or to take a walk; she wouldn't even talk; she just sat there, with her books.

Her efforts at self-improvement were not touching, had nothing of stumbling pathos about them. She was too clever, too careful. She learned to dress with quiet precision, without paint, without flamboyant allure. She learned to speak better, she stopped swearing, except under great provocation; she even learned to control her temper to a degree that alarmed her mother. The hot, sudden anger was there—it came as readily as ever; but it was still now. She didn't "fly out." And all this disturbed and exasperated Mrs. Kennedy. She had no sympathy for any of it.

"Whatever in the world do you expect to *do*?" she asked irritably, one evening, while Angelica sat reading a paper book on etiquette.

"I'm going to be as good as the best of them," said Angelica. "Why shouldn't I be?"

"Plenty of reason why you shouldn't!" said her mother tartly.

But the wicked continued to prosper, until Mrs. Kennedy almost believed that God gave no justice.

One day a letter came for Angelica. This startled her mother, for they never got letters.

"It's from him," she thought. "Bad news, maybe!"

But it was postmarked New York; it couldn't be from Eddie.

“Now, whoever in the world can be writing to Angie!” she thought, alarmed and uneasy, as she always was over the girl’s mysterious activities. However she might regard Angelica’s moral shortcomings, she loved her only child. She knew that she deserved punishment, but she would have given her own life to save her from it.

Directly Angie came in from work she handed her the letter.

“Oh, Gawd!” she muttered. “Mommer! It’s from her—the one that’s got the baby.”

Her face was ghastly. Perhaps, after all, she hadn’t escaped so easily as her mother imagined. Perhaps, after all, she longed for her child and missed it with immeasurable bitterness, like any human mother.

Angelica couldn’t bear to open the letter. For what other reason would Polly write to her but to tell her of the baby’s illness or death? She had warmly urged Angelica to come whenever she wished to see the child, but Angelica had refused. She didn’t want to see him there with Polly. She wished to—she must—look upon him as utterly lost to her. Once in a while she was overcome with longing, and would telephone simply to ask after him, and, reassured, would resolutely turn her mind away. But if he were really gone, no longer in the world!

She opened the letter at last, and the very sight of it, before her brain had grasped its meaning, comforted her—the neatly formed letters, the friendly look of the page:

DEAR ANGELICA:

Dress yourself in your very nicest and go to see Miss Sillon in her shop, “Fine Feathers,” on the south side of Washington Square. I spoke to her about you, and I believe there is a very good opportunity there for you. They want a milliner—some one to take a small salary and a share in the profits. They are nice girls, and you’ll enjoy being with them. I really think it is just what you want. Anyway, try it, won’t you? And let me know if it suits.

Your friend, as always,

POLLY GERALDINE.

P. S.—He is doing splendidly.

Angelica read the letter to her mother, all but the signature, and ate her supper in silence.

"Sit down, mommer," she said. "I'll wash the dishes. I guess I'll lay off for a while to-morrow and go and see about this thing."

III

It was Angelica at her newest and best who walked across Fourth Street the next morning. She had for a long time sternly withheld most of her wages from her mother, who needed the money for vital necessities, and had bought herself a decent outfit, to go with her new soul. She was plainly dressed, but no longer with a trace of shabbiness. She wore a neat dark suit, a black sailor hat, good boots and gloves. Her swagger was gone, and so was her provocative and insolent glance; she had a sobriety and decorum quite beyond reproach.

She saw the shop, and entered. It was a small private house, dilapidated and moribund, fitted out with purple and white striped curtains at the windows and a great sign-board over the front gate—a wooden peacock, brilliantly colored, with 'Fine Feathers' painted in bold black letters across it. The shop was what had once been a front parlour—a long, narrow room with a marble mantelpiece and an ornate ceiling. It was furnished now, with great audacity, solely by four kitchen chairs painted white, with round purple cushions on them, a table on which were strewn original designs for wraps and dresses done in crayons, and a fine pair of black velvet portières concealing the back room. Four long mirrors were set into the walls.

The owners were both poor and clever. They knew well that this childish brightness would be thought artistic, original, and distinguished by the greatly desirable bourgeoisie, and that the more sophisticated would be amused. As for Angelica, she was impressed.

A tall young girl with fluffy red hair hastened in from the back room.

"Yes?" she asked, with non-committal amiability.

"Mrs. Geraldine sent me," said Angelica. "I'd like to see Miss Sillon, please."

"Oh! I'm Miss Devery, but I'll do. I'm the partner. I've heard about you. Millinery, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Angelica, confidently.

"Sit down, won't you? We can talk it over a bit. Miss Sillon will be in presently. You see, Miss Sillon and I just started this place six months ago, but we're doing so well that we feel justified in branching out a bit. So we thought of a millinery department. We were speaking of it to Mrs. Geraldine—she's one of our oldest customers, you know—and she said she knew just the person. She said you were a wonder at hats."

Angelica smiled a little. She was surprised and delighted by this pretty red-haired girl with her naïve air and babyish voice—a lady, if ever there was one, and yet so simple and friendly with Angelica. She wanted greatly to work in that purple and white room with her.

"Now," said Miss Devery, "I'll tell you what we can do. We'd let you have both the windows, to display your hats; and that's worth something. Then we'd give you ten per cent of all the sales you make, and provide the materials as well. We have lots of scraps and odds and ends; so you'd be under no expense at all."

"But I'd have to have a salary to start with."

Miss Devery bit her lip doubtfully.

"Well, you see," she said candidly, "we're rather short of cash. We've made quite a bit, but after we've paid our living expenses we turn it all back into the business. We're growing fast, and if you come in with us now you'll really have a splendid chance. We have a perfectly fine connection, you know—some of the very nicest people."

"But——" began Angelica, and stopped short. "I'd like to think it over," she said. "How long can I take?"

"Why, a week, if you wish; but I hope you'll come. You're just the sort of girl we want. We don't commercialize the thing. We want to keep it *nice*."

Angelica smiled again with a dreary sort of triumph. So she had fooled one of the nice ones, anyway!

"Of course," went on Miss Devery, "if you'd rather, you could provide a little capital and your own materials, and we'd let you right in with us. Miss Sillon would show you the books and so on."

Angelica had risen. She could see her own reflection in one of the long mirrors, and she could not help feeling that she really looked more of a lady than the girl who actually was one.

"I'll let you know," she said, carefully. She was fearfully tempted to try, just for once, to talk as they did. "It's awfully attractive," she said. "I'd love to go into it with you; but I want to talk it over with mother."

It succeeded! Miss Devery noticed nothing at all strange in her tone or her words.

"Telephone just as soon as you decide, won't you?" she said.

IV

Mrs. Kennedy wasn't in the flat when Angelica got home. She was up-stairs, cleaning a vacant flat, and thither Angelica followed her. She was scrubbing the pan of a gas-stove—a vilely dirty thing, heavily incrustated with grease and slime, in which were embedded dead matches and bits of food.

"Mother!"

The unaccustomed word surprised her. She turned to look into Angelica's face smiling down at her.

"Mother, will you support me for a while?"

"Why, child, of course! I'll do whatever I can for you. Have you lost your job?"

"No, but I'm going to try something new. It may not bring in anything much for quite a while, but I think after a time it'll be a regular gold-mine. And it's very *nice*. I know Eddie would like me to do it!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

I

She hadn't allowed herself to think about Eddie's reply. She insisted to herself that it would be, must be, favourable; but when the letter came, when at last she held it in her hand, she was panic-stricken. She reverted.

"Oh, Gawd!" she murmured. "What if he's changed his mind?"

This is what she read:

MY DEAREST GIRL:

You can't possibly imagine how I felt when I got your letter. I was still in the hospital where I had been for five months with a bad foot, and, to tell you the truth, I didn't care much whether I ever went out of it again. I can't explain it very well, but there is something about the war and this filthy, brutal way of living that makes it unbearable to lose any pleasures or joys out of life. You get to believe that nothing matters except being happy. And you *are* my happiness. When I thought I'd lost you, I didn't care about going on. Of course, there's your country, and your family, and your ambition, and so on, but somehow they don't seem *real*. I thought of you all the time. I wrote and wrote, and didn't get any answer. Then I asked Vincent to look you up, but he wrote that you'd moved and he couldn't trace you. I don't quite see how I could have gone back on the firing²line again if you hadn't written. It's bad enough anyway, but it wouldn't be bearable without some sort of guiding star. Don't think I'm getting sentimental, Angelica, but you are that, you know, to me.

I hope this will soon be over. It's worse than I thought it would be; but I'm glad I came. I wouldn't like other fellows to be doing this job for me. But when I get home! It seems like a vision of Paradise—you waiting for me, and my home, and good food and a nice, clean bed, and hot water!

I don't want you to think that I've deteriorated, that I'm always thinking of physical things, because I'm not. When you're always uncomfortable, you can't help thinking too much about comfort; but

I think much more about other things. I think a lot about what is the best way to use a life. I can see lots of things I've done wrong. I look forward awfully to making a fresh start. It will all seem so new, like being born again. Everything will seem remarkable and interesting—all sort of things I didn't use to notice.

And to think that there was a time when I used to think quite calmly about being married to you! Of course, my dear, I always did look forward to it as the greatest possible happiness, but I more or less took it for granted—the sort of happiness a fellow always expects. But now, Angelica, it seems as wonderful and beautiful and far off as heaven. I can't even really believe that I'll see you ever again. I've got so used to being a lousy, muddy, hunted animal that I can't believe it will ever end. I don't even long for the end; it seems so impossible. I have a damnable conviction—an obsession, I suppose they'd call it—that every one gets killed in the war. So many of the chaps I knew have gone, often killed beside me—and in the hospital, dying so sickeningly! I can't help imagining that every one in the world is dying. So that the idea of coming home and marrying you is—I can't describe what it is. Really and literally a dream of heaven.

Angelica, darling, don't disappoint me again! I couldn't bear it. Write to me faithfully, as often as possible—even every day. It wouldn't be much to do, for you who are at home and safe and comfortable.

With all my heart,
EDDIE.

Now this letter might have disappointed another girl, but not Angelica. She didn't at all mind its being so little lover-like, so much concerned with Eddie and his feelings, and so little concerned with herself. She was, in fact, very proud that such a learned and serious young man as Eddie should write to her at all. She was overjoyed, exultant, to see that he still wanted her—with a sort of humility in her joy quite unusual in her.

"I won't disappoint him ever again!" she cried. "I'll do my very best. I'll just *live* for him! And if it's like a dream of heaven to him," she reflected, "so it is to me. I've suffered, too. It couldn't have been much worse for any one, anywhere. Oh, won't it be heaven to be *safe*—to be his wife, and settled there at Buena Vista, and rich, and every one looking up to me? A motor-car of my own, and lovely

clothes, and a beautiful room! I'll have Miss Sillon and Miss Devery out to see me."

She looked at herself in the mirror.

"I'm getting to look refined," she thought; "not factory any more. When I can have real grand clothes, I'll be *beautiful!* Vincent said I lost heaven when I stopped loving him," she reflected. "Well, I'll get it back again, with Eddie!"

II

In spite of his entreaty, she waited for more than a week before she replied to Eddie's letter, for she wished to have something to tell him. She spent two entire evenings over her letter, and when it was done there was hardly a mistake in it, in spelling, in grammar, or in sentiment; for Angelica was fast learning the correct way to feel.

DEAR EDDIE:

Your letter was wonderful, and I could not write one nearly so good, or so interesting. I understand how you feel, but I do not know how to say anything. I feel like that, too, afraid to expect any happiness, but I want to fight for it. I want to tell God that I will not be cheated, and that it has all got to come out right.

I go to the movies with mother whenever there is a war picture, to try and get some idea what it is like over there, but I guess no one can. That is another thing I don't dare to think about—all that you must be suffering. But, Eddie dear, I will try my best to make it up to you when you get back.

I don't go to the factory any more, but I have a very nice place as a milliner with two girls who have a shop in Washington Square. I am doing nicely. I design the hats myself and make them, and Miss Sillon says it will not be long before my hats are recognized everywhere in New York. "Angélique," I call myself on the label I sew in the hats. She says they are almost too daring, but very original.

She wanted to write more—much more—about her hats, but she knew it wouldn't do. She was required to fill up the letter with general observations and with her interest in Eddie, and she did so.

She was pleased with this letter, and yet it troubled her. She felt both mean and cruel. She knew that she had nothing to give Eddie; she knew that in every way she was defrauding and injuring him. To stifle her distress she had only her profound faith in herself, her conviction that she had obliterated the past and could and would make a glorious future. She couldn't help contrasting her laboured and prudent letter with his careless candour. Evidently he didn't care what he said. He just wrote her what came to his mind. He felt so sure of her!

"I haven't really done him any harm," she protested, lying awake in the dark. "If he never knows, it's just exactly the same—for him—as if it had never happened."

And still she knew that she was forcing him to play the part he would have hated and rejected beyond any other—that of the poor dishonoured fool. She didn't even love him.

"I'll learn to love him!" she cried. "I love him a little bit already."

And still she knew how much she disliked even the memory of his kisses.

Sometimes a wave of sheer terror overcame her.

"No one's ever done such a thing," she thought, remembering all the stories she had read. "It can't be done. Somehow—some day—it would be found out. It always is!"

But this she could combat.

"I don't care if it's never been done!" she would cry. "I'll do it! I'll marry Eddie, and he'll *never know*, and it'll all end happily. I'll make it! I *won't* be found out!"

CHAPTER NINE

I

Angelica's new business suited her exactly. It absorbed her mind, and it trained and shaped and educated her to an extraordinary degree. Her bravado vanished when she no longer felt herself inferior; now that she was openly acknowledged to be a clever and rising young woman, she had no need of her old-time self-assertion. She thrived in an atmosphere of praise. Miss Sillon and Miss Devery loved her and her brilliant hats. They lauded her, petted her, and took all possible means to advance her interests, because they liked her, and because her interests and theirs were inseparable.

Miss Devery, who was the artistic member of the firm, went outside in a purple linen smock one morning and put a crêpe paper hat on the peacock. As often as the rain soaked it, or the wind tore or carried it off, she fastened on another. It was very odd and whimsical, and it suited the unique character of their shop.

This unique character was their chief stock in trade, and they both knew very well how to use it to advantage.

"The awfully chic, exclusive thing has really been overdone," Miss Sillon told Angelica. "All the people with money are crazy now for anything they imagine is artistic and quaint. They think it shows that they're artistic to like such things; and just now, of course, it's *the* thing to be artistic."

She was a complete contrast to the dimpled, red-haired Miss Devery, with her air of polite amusement. She was

a short, energetic, very dark little body, lively, talkative, and witty.

"I'm a perfect dressmaker," she told Angelica. "God made me so. Just to look at me makes people turn red with shame and make up their minds on the spot to have something nice and new and trim."

Angelica acknowledged that never had she seen a better-dressed woman, or a neater one.

"I dye my hair and lace as tight as I dare," Miss Sillon continued, "but I do it with pride and vainglory. I boldly call it a duty. I tell these silly women it's the most important thing in life to keep oneself looking one's best, and they always agree. Not one of them ever had the sense to inquire what it's done for *me*. Here I've been looking my best for forty years, and look at me, still digging away for a living, while these wretched, slovenly little chits with holes in their stockings and all their buttons off are settled down with fine husbands and babies and everything else they want! Look at Devery—sloppy kid! She's never without a man hanging about after her."

Devery smiled.

"They're mostly bad ones," she said. "Dishonourable intentions, sometimes, but generally *no* intentions at all. I don't get no 'forrader,' Sillon. But this Angélique—she's the one! She's just made for a millionaire's bride."

Miss Sillon turned to stare at her.

"Devery," she said suddenly, "she's not quaint enough. Get to work and make her quaint!"

"That I can't do. She's not built along quaint lines; but I'll make her bizarre."

So Miss Devery set to work. She designed and made for Angelica an extraordinary dress of dark red jersey cloth that fitted her like a snake-skin, as she said. It was entirely plain and severe, with long sleeves and a skirt reaching to her ankles. It made her look lean, tall, and savage. Then she parted her hair in the middle and knotted it low on her

neck, hung big gold earrings in her ears, and around her neck a string of cloudy pale-green beads reaching to her knees. When all this was done, she called in Miss Sillon.

"*Now!*" she said. "*What, eh?*"

"Barbaric," said Miss Sillon; "but Lord, how attractive the creature is! Seriously, though," she added, "do you think she fits in with our nice little quaintness? She's positively terrible!"

"A new thing in milliners," said Miss Devery. "Sillon, I'm proud! She's my masterpiece."

"Very well," said Miss Sillon. "We won't touch her. She shall stand as you have made her; but, Angélique, my child, *how* you will have to design to keep up with your appearance!"

"I can do it," said Angelica firmly. "I've got some fine ideas."

For what had she been doing of late but visiting the Public Library and studying the lives of all of Eddie's magnificent women whom she could remember, and, from their portraits, gleaning the suggestions upon which she later worked?

She was supremely happy at her work. To sit sewing with Miss Devery and Miss Sillon all the morning, listening to their bright and jolly talk, and entering into it, was unfailing delight. They quite frankly admired her brains and her beauty, and treated her exactly as one of themselves. If they saw any difference, anything inferior in her, they concealed it.

Angelica felt that they didn't know, that they imagined her to be of the same class as themselves. It didn't occur to her that they didn't care; that so long as she behaved herself with amiability and good sense, and was of value in their business, they were in no way concerned about her grammar or her table manners. She imagined that they were always looking for signs of good breeding, signs of bad breeding, little tricks she hadn't learned yet. She used

to read all that sort of thing in the women's magazines, and she often discovered, to her deep distress, that she had been doing horrible things, even in the presence of Devery and Sillon. She had, for instance, put on her gloves in the street; she had said "phone" and "auto," and still they remained friendly.

They were a type entirely novel to her; she had not even read of their sort. Well-born and well-educated English-women, they had knocked about the world to an amazing extent. There was very little they didn't know, although there was a very great deal they chose to ignore in life.

Miss Devery was the youngest in a family of nine—children of a poor clergyman in the south of England. She had begun her career as a governess in a French family. Leaving that, she had drifted about in Paris, studied drawing a little, and given English lessons, always charming and gay and perfectly at home. Then she had gone to a married brother in Australia, and after a few years of that, helping his wife with her babies on their sheep-farm, she had followed the commands of her own sweet and careless heart and gone to America. And here she was, at twenty-six, quite alone in the world, half-forgotten by her people at home, who were rather fond of her, but couldn't keep her in mind.

Miss Sillon was different. Her father was a doctor who had ruined himself with drink, and she had had monstrous responsibilities and cares upon her shoulders ever since childhood, when her mother had died. God knows what she hadn't tried, to earn her honest bread. She had been a children's nurse in London, stewardess on a South American ship, librarian in a Canadian city; she had worked in a newspaper office and in a bakery, she had taught music in a suburban school. She was also entirely alone on earth, but it didn't trouble her.

Both she and Miss Devery would have been able to pick

up a living in any part of the civilized world. They were attached to each other, without being quite aware of their affection. They had met one day at a cheap lunch-room, and had rushed together like two morsels of quicksilver. Why not? They were more than harmonious; they were in essence identical.



How bitterly Mrs. Kennedy missed her wayward and troublesome child, who had ordered her about and sworn at her, and so vehemently kissed her! This neat young woman, busy at her books in the kitchen every evening, always up and dressed at the right time in the morning, was a stranger, was in no way hers. She would sit in the rocking-chair—after the kitchen was clean and tidy—and take up the newspaper Angelica had brought in, or perhaps a magazine, and pretend to read; but she never could. She had no habit of reading. Her great need was to talk.

She would look at her daughter, and rock and sigh. A weary world, where even rest had lost its beauty!

There were sometimes evenings when Miss Sillon and Miss Devery invited Angelica to go with them to one of the little Italian restaurants in the neighbourhood. In this case Angelica was always punctilious to telephone to her mother, and she was never out later than ten, so that it didn't occur to her to pity the wretched woman.

She didn't imagine how terrible those evenings were to Mrs. Kennedy, how she groped about the kitchen, blinded by tears, setting out her tiny meal, finding relief in loud sobs like hiccoughs. She saw that something was the matter with her mother, but she fancied that it was age, ill health, poverty, years of hardship.

It was none of these pains which so grievously afflicted

Mrs. Kennedy. It was because she was being left behind. She who had all her life feared and foreseen that she would be obliged to die and leave her beloved child, now saw this child—as she had known her—quite dead and gone, and herself left desolate.

CHAPTER TEN

I

There was one particular day—a sort of seventh wave in her steady tide of success—that Angelica always remembered. To begin with, when she reached Fine Feathers, there was what Miss Devery had promised her should be there—‘ANGÉLIQUE,’ in purple letters across the two front windows. She stopped in the street to admire it, in delight, almost in awe. So far had she come, with such celerity—she, the one-time factory worker! It hardly seemed possible!

She lingered to think of her present magic life, so full of delights and satisfactions; her days filled with this work that she loved, handling the silks, the satins, the velvets, the plumes, the rhinestones, all the rich and vivid things she so adored; the chatter of Devery and Sillon, which never failed to entertain her; the very feeling of being an independent and promising young business woman, with an account well started in a savings-bank. She thought of the charmed evenings she sometimes spent with her partners—dinner at a near-by table d’hôte, and then a seat in the second balcony, to see some play which they had selected. She thought of those long, quiet evenings of study at home, in the tidy kitchen, with the clock that ticked so loudly on the tin tubs.

She was able now to give her mother a respectable sum every week. She was, in fact, rapidly becoming the most important member of the ‘Fine Feathers’ establishment, and she had some time ago entered into a new and far more advantageous arrangement with Miss Sillon. Devery and

Sillon were clever and good workwomen, and they had built up a nice little business for themselves; but Angelica was something beyond that—she was the one person especially adapted at that instant of time to design hats which would superlatively please the women of that particular city.

She catered to women with money, of course. She raised her prices fantastically; and when women came in, shame-faced and apologetic because of the fierce denunciations of the war posters they saw outside, she knew just what to say.

“Yes, madam,” she agreed. “A hundred and fifty dollars is a large price for a simple little hat. Of course you can get some sort of thing for ten.” She who not so long ago had been used to buy one for a dollar and trim it with all sorts of little scraps! “But it’s much more economical to get *one* really *good* one, that will keep its style until it’s worn out, than half a dozen cheaper ones.”

None of her customers had yet pointed out that one could buy fifteen cheaper hats for this price, which, allowing three months for the season, would require of each hat less than a week’s endurance. Every one who came to her really wished to pay too much for a hat. They all knew, of course, that the bit of fur and lace and satin she gave them didn’t cost one-fifth of the price, but they paid the surplus for the style—that Angélique style.

She went into the back parlour, where Sillon and Devery were draping a collapsible form in a green tulle.

“Hello!” they both said, cheerfully.

“Wouldn’t you know this dress was for a fat woman—or should I say, a well-rounded figure?” said Devery. “They’re all wild about green, the big ones. I wonder why?”

“Congratulate her!” said Sillon. “Angelica, tell her how nice your name looks out there. There she was, all Sunday afternoon, painting it and talking about your greatness and your coming rise to fame and fortune.”

Angelica sat down.

"It's lovely," she said. "It makes me as happy as can be to see it there, like that; but I've been thinking—isn't it all queer, and silly?—about their saying my hats are so becoming, and all that. Why, they could get lots of things that really suited them better for almost nothing! Do you know what I think it is? I think it's because when I make 'em pay so much they take more pains in putting the things on, and that's why they look better. They dress their hair so carefully, and try to have everything—harmonious."

"That's a trade secret," said Sillon. "It isn't at all the thing to say. Our line is, 'Of course, if you want anything really good, you've got to pay for it.' Stick to that, Angélique!"

"Down with the rich!" said Devery. "Bleed them white and drain them dry!"

"My father was a Socialist," said Angelica, with calm assurance. She had no need to add, and they had no need to know, that he had been a Socialist barber; nor was she yet advanced enough not to avoid, with ridiculous shame, her Italian blood. "Mother says he was specially furious at women who spent a lot on clothes."

This was another block in the edifice she was painfully erecting. She was creating for herself a past and an environment which, without being extravagantly false, should yet be in keeping with what she intended to become—a foundation for her coming greatness. She often mentioned, casually, her father and her mother and her Scotch grandparents. She admitted that she and her mother were poor, but she suggested an admirable and distinguished poorness. She had actually got so far as to indicate, with rare delicacy, that her being in business was a distress to her old-fashioned mother.

All through that day there was the same elating and intoxicating success. All the customers who came in were satisfied, praised her, and paid her money. Nothing went wrong.

At lunch-time Sillon made cocoa on the gas-stove in the pantry off the back parlour, and Devery cooked spaghetti. And for the first time they took her up into the little bedroom they had on the floor above, and showed her some of their belongings—photographs of uncles, brothers, cousins. Sillon had a stuffed cobra and a thrilling tale about it, and Devery some studies she had made in her Paris days.

Then they all went into the street, to look again at the "ANGÉLIQUE"; lingering in the October brightness, the wind blowing their skirts, their hair, making them frolicsome and gay.

"I *hate* work!" said Devery, stretching up her thin arms, while her purple smock whipped about her lean, straight torso in classic folds.

"What would you like to do?" asked Angelica.

"Just live—like cats, without any aim. I'd never accomplish anything. Just as soon as you do accomplish anything, you see that it wasn't worth doing. What *is*?"

"Devery, you're morbid and hypocritical," said Sillon. "You don't mean that. Besides, cats don't feel like that, my child. When they've caught a mouse, they feel that it was very much worth doing."

"Oh, well, so do I! I think it's worth while to catch my meals, somehow. Angelica, what an industrious soul you are! I don't believe you'd enjoy being idle."

"I'd be miserable if I didn't think I was getting forward."

"How did we get such a paragon?" asked Sillon.

"Suppose we go out to dinner?" suggested Devery suddenly. "Early, and then to the movies?"

"I'll telephone to mother first," said Angelica, "to see if it will be all right if I don't go home."

A punctilious and Eddie-like form, and nothing more.

"Mother!" she began. "I won't be home for dinner."

"Angie!" came the very tremulous voice of Mrs. Kennedy, always distressed at the telephone. "Better come home

as early as you can. There's a lady here to see you—Mrs. Russell."

Angelica was shocked, terrified.

"Something's happened to Eddie!" she thought at first. And then came an idea that turned her cold with fright. "They've found out! She knows! She's come to tell me what she thinks of me!"

II

Nothing of the sort, however. Mrs. Russell sat there, waiting, all smiles and affability, for the sole purpose of inviting Angelica to visit Buena Vista. She had had a letter from Eddie, in which he had rather severely requested her to show all due civility to his future wife.

"He really means it!" she had said to her husband. "I hoped he'd forgotten. I really thought the thing had blown over. Beastly, isn't it? Imagine her here!"

"It doesn't frighten me," Dr. Russell said jauntily.

"Satyr!" she said. "You can't be trusted out of my sight!"

And both he and she were pleased and proud of his senile impudence.

Mrs. Russell had been chatting with—or perhaps to—Mrs. Kennedy for a long time, about God knows what—the war, for one thing. Their views were very dissimilar; Mrs. Kennedy hadn't a trace of patriotism. She maintained that it was a bad thing to kill so many young men, no matter why it was done. She wasn't interested in German perfidy. She only hoped it would soon be over, no matter how. It wouldn't make any difference who won, she said.

"Would you like to live under German rule," demanded Mrs. Russell, "and have some brutal Prussian officer swearing at you and ill-treating you?"

"I don't believe officers would ever bother about me,

American or German," she replied. "What would they be doing, hanging around where I was working? No, ma'am. Poor people haven't got anything to lose. They don't feel the same about their country; I dare say because they don't own any of it. Of course, if those Germans were to come here, they'd very likely take away your house and your jewelry and so on; but they wouldn't be likely to trouble *me*."

"But your daughter? She's a very beautiful girl, you know. How would you like some unspeakable Hun to insult her—or worse?"

Mrs. Kennedy was silent. She felt in her heart that nothing much worse than what had happened could ever happen to her child. She simply listened to her visitor's accounts of outrages with decent, womanly interest.

She was included in Mrs. Russell's invitation to Angelica to spend a week-end at Buena Vista, but she refused, as she was obviously intended to do.

"Thank you kindly," she said. "I haven't the time."

"Why don't you go, mother?" Angelica asked her, out of curiosity, when they were alone again. "I should think you'd like to make a visit in a fine house like that. And it's going to be mine some day!"

"I don't think so," said Mrs. Kennedy. "I don't believe the Almighty would allow such a thing. No, Angelica, there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

"Not when your hand's steady."

Mrs. Kennedy was a little bewildered at having her time-honoured maxim treated imaginatively.

"Even then," she said, after an instant, "some one can come behind and give you a shove; or the Almighty can interfere."

Angelica, at the zenith of her triumph, invited guest of Mrs. Russell, publicly acknowledged as Eddie's betrothed, smiled.

"He won't!" she said. "He's on my side!"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

So behold Angelica returning to Buena Vista in this quite new rôle, coming up from the station in a taxi, if you please. She was thinking all the way of her last visit, of that be-draggled and desperate creature that had been herself.

"I've won!" she said. "I've won! All alone—everything against me—and still I've won!"

She stepped out, and paid the driver with perfect assurance. She wasn't really poor now, and she could, with perfect propriety, afford a cab now and then.

She knew that she was late, but she was conscious of blamelessness. There had been a difficult customer who couldn't be left, and who, properly handled, had bought two outrageously dear hats. She was, in fact, very proud of being a business woman who couldn't help being late.

She had expected that the family would be at dinner, for she couldn't quite believe that they would wait for her. She didn't expect anything more than decent tolerance; she didn't in the least resent the trace of condescension in Mrs. Russell's manner. She couldn't fool Mrs. Russell with conservative Scottish grandparents or an old-fashioned mother. Mrs. Russell *knew*.

There was no light in the dining-room, so she went up on to the piazza and looked into the library window, for there was a blaze of light coming from there.

And there they all were, sitting about a table, playing cards. Unconsciously, involuntarily, her eyes sought and rested upon Vincent first of all. He sat in profile toward her, just the same as ever, handsome, bold, with his look of vigour and zest. All that had happened was nothing but an

episode to him; hadn't even ruffled him. She couldn't bear to look at him any more.

Opposite him sat the doctor; facing the window, Mrs. Russell, and, with his back to Angelica, a strange young man in a tweed suit very much too big for him. Wasn't it a suit Vincent used to wear?

"Now who's that?" she wondered.

Suddenly Mrs. Russell flung down her cards with a slap.

"Oh, you chump!" she cried. "It's no use. You'll never be any good!"

An aggrieved voice, which Angelica recognized at once, answered:

"Well, what of it? I never said I wanted to play, did I? You said I had to learn, to make it four. Well, then, I can't, and that's all there is to it!"

"Courtland in there, playing cards with them!" thought Angelica. "What would Eddie say?"

The doctor got up and stretched.

"What of dinner, Marian?" he asked his wife airily.

"I'll see," she said, and went briskly out of the room.

Angelica rang the bell, and Courtland came to admit her.

"Hello!" he said. "What do *you* want?"

She repressed the too ready answer that was at the tip of her tongue, and said, with dignity:

"Mrs. Russell expects me."

"Well, she's in the kitchen," said Courtland, in conversational tone. "She helps Annie now while——"

"All right!" said Angelica. "I'll go down."

She had reached the dark passage at the foot of the kitchen stairs when a hand on her shoulder arrested her.

"Angelica!" said Vincent's voice. "What are you doing here? Go away! I'll send you money—I swear I will! Only go away! You won't get anything out of me by hounding me this way."

"I didn't come here to get money out of you. I don't expect anything more from you."

He couldn't see her face, but her voice was steady and quiet. He grew yet more alarmed.

"What did you come here for? What do you want?"

"It's none of your business," she said slowly.

She was struggling with a terrible fury against him—this careless young man who was living so well without her. She longed to let herself go, to turn on him with a torrent of abuse, to swear at him, shriek at him; but she must not. She dared not antagonize him. He, too, had a temper, and, if he lost it, God only knew what irreparable harm he might do her. She had now, and always, either to propitiate him or to frighten him; by some means to make him hold his tongue.

Vincent's arm tightened on Angelica's shoulder.

"You've got to tell me!" he said. "I'll have no more of your damned nonsense. What do you want here?"

She made no answer, but stood motionless in the dark.

"Tell me!" he said fiercely. "What do you expect to get here?"

Still she was silent.

"You answer me," he hissed, "or I'll——"

She laughed.

"You'll *what?*" she asked contemptuously. "Throw me down the stairs? Choke me?"

He released her.

"You damnable woman!" he said. "You've some outrageous scheme, I know; but you'll get nothing out of me. Nothing! Not a penny!"

"I don't suppose I will!" she said, half to herself, as she turned away and went on into the kitchen.

There, on a high stool before the table, sat Mrs. Russell, wearing an apron and, unaccountably, a little housemaid's cap. Her great feet were twisted about the stool, and she was bent forward intently over the salad she was mixing. Annie was at the stove, stirring, tasting, lifting covers,

peering into the oven, and listening, with an air of complete incredulity, to her mistress.

"My dear!" cried Mrs. Russell, catching sight of Angelica. "How nice!"

She had, to tell the truth, quite forgotten that she had invited her.

"I'm sorry I'm late——" Angelica began.

"It doesn't matter. We're late too," she answered. "I help Annie every evening now. We haven't any cook—only Annie and that nice little Molly, and a woman who comes in by the day. War economy! But I really rather like it, and Annie has taught me so much!"

She looked at Annie with an ingratiating smile—of which Annie took not the slightest notice.

"After all," she went on, "I suppose we really ought to know how to cook—all of us women, shouldn't we? The men do their part, so nobly, going off to fight and——" She stopped, suddenly bored with her subject. "So you see!" she said inanely, smiling again.

Angelica looked about the enormous kitchen, so spotless, so brightly lit, so marvelously equipped.

"It's a nice place to work in," she said. "See here! Won't you teach me? I'd like to learn."

Annie stood looking at her with a highly displeased expression. She didn't understand this return of Angelica, and Mrs. Russell's great friendliness toward her; and no one explained anything.

"Of course we will, my dear! You ought to learn! Let's see. What can she do, Annie?"

"Nothing, ma'am," said Annie firmly. "It's all done and ready to serve."

"Nonsense! It isn't. I know it isn't. Let's see. My dear, I'll show you how to do a spinach *purée*. It's delicious, and frightfully good for the blood. We're all eating spinach almost every night now. Watch me!"

Angelica was hungry and weary, but she profited to the

full by this novel lesson in her great course of preparation. She watched, she questioned, she tried her own hand at it.

Mrs. Russell praised her.

"You're very quick!" she said. "Now we'll help Annie to put the dishes on the dumb-waiter; then we've just half a minute to wash and brush up."

She led the way to her room, lively, cheerful, almost affectionate; and although Angelica knew how very uncertain and shallow this good-humour was, nevertheless it helped her.

She had decided upon a step which dismayed her. She had decided to talk to Vincent—to reason with him, to threaten or to cajole him. He was the one danger, the one person she had to dread. No matter how carefully she went, he could in an instant destroy all that she had built up; he could really ruin her. She had been trying for a long time to devise some method for ensuring his silence, for gaining a little security. She had begun and torn up more than one letter. Now that they were once more under the same roof, she felt it a unique opportunity which she was too brave to shirk. She couldn't go on, never feeling sure, never knowing what he would do, what he had done.

She was startled to find Courtland sitting at the dinner-table; but as the others took him as a matter of course, she showed no surprise, although she was not at all pleased to be seated next to him.

The doctor had an evening paper.

"The news," he said, "isn't good—not in Eddie's section. He's going to be just in the center of the line to oppose the next big drive."

"Fiddlesticks!" said his wife. "You don't know where he is, or where the next drive is coming. Only the *stuff* you read in the papers!"

"I use my brains, and I put two and two together——"

"He doesn't know himself where he is," said Vincent. "Most of the chaps don't. They're like driven sheep."

"Of course they know!" said Mrs. Russell. "You don't suppose they're blindfolded, do you?"

A loud and violent discussion followed, all three of them talking at once, under cover of which Angelica addressed her neighbour.

"What are you doing up here?"

"Just what you're doin'," replied Courtland. "Eatin' my dinner."

She had no opportunity to say more to him, for Mrs. Russell peremptorily ordered him to fetch the car, and, after gulping down his pudding in sullen resentment, he left the table.

"I've got to take Vincent to the Country Club," she said. "He's going to sing 'Sambre et Meuse' at an entertainment there. My dear, you should hear him. Of course we're all supposed to be strictly neutral, and all that, but up there, at the club, the pretense is frightfully thin. All really decent people, you know. We have a dear little wounded Belgian officer who's going to speak; but I've heard him simply hundreds of times, so I won't wait. I'll be home in half an hour. Make yourself at home, won't you?"

Angelica reassured her light-hearted hostess that she would be altogether happy and comfortable until her return, and, after the motor-car had gone, wandered back into the library, looking for a book.

But she couldn't read. She began to contemplate her coming interview with Vincent.

She could not trust him for an instant. She never knew when he would be moved to tell the entire story to Eddie, or to his mother, or to any one else. If he were attacked by one of his fits of remorse, he would be almost certain to do so. She held him only by a threat made in a mood of supreme passion, which she could never recapture.

Despair crept over her. This step along her stony path seemed too difficult. She had no violent emotion to carry her forward now; no impetus remained from her former

terrific onslaughts. She had simply to state a request—a request of the utmost importance to all her future life; and she felt quite sure it would be refused.

Her very unpleasant reverie was broken into by the entrance of the doctor. He came, he said, to apologize on behalf of Mrs. Russell for her lateness. She wouldn't be able, after all, to escape the entertainment. He had brought Angelica a large, marvelous box of sweets, which he offered with a sort of subdued gallantry. She accepted it carelessly, and for a while listened to his talk.

He had quite changed his tune now. He couldn't keep an irrepressible jauntiness, or a sort of airy flattery, from his conversation with so pretty a girl; but he was deferential and decorous. He and his wife were both entirely resigned to the idea of Angelica as Eddie's wife. If Eddie had to be married, one woman was as good as another, and Angelica was perhaps a little better than a possible alternative. At least they knew her, and they had, in a way, a sort of advantage with her.

"I guess I'll go to bed," said Angelica, who had been politely waiting for a pause in the doctor's war talk. "I'm tired!"

She went up to the room she had occupied before, prepared to go to bed at once; but she found the room just as she had left it, all that long, long time ago—bare, dismal, the bed covered with a sheet, the rugs taken up, leaving the floor bare, the curtains gone, dark shades pulled down.

An angry flush spread over her face. At first she believed that she saw here a deliberate insult; but with reflection she became satisfied that it was not intentional. It was simply another evidence of Mrs. Russell's magnificent indifference. She sat down in that same little chair by the window, where she used to sit a year ago. A year ago!

She had plenty to think of, there, until Mrs. Russell came back.

Mrs. Russell at once began to blame Annie for having

forgotten to attend to the room, but in a subdued voice, because she didn't dare to let Annie hear this wickedly unjust censure. The maid hadn't forgotten to get the room ready; it hadn't been mentioned to her.

She was summoned.

"Annie," said Mrs. Russell, as if to share the blame, "here's Miss Kennedy's room not ready! I'll help you with it."

All she really contributed was her curious ability to create an atmosphere of bustle and cheerful confusion—the quality which had won her so much praise for her war work. When at last the room was ready, she had become frightfully bored with it and with Angelica, and was in a reckless hurry to be off.

"Good night!" she cried cheerfully. "Ring, if we've forgotten anything!"

And she vanished, leaving Angelica alone with Annie, who was just shaking a final pillow into its embroidered linen case. She set it straight on the bed, and turned, grim as death.

"Well!" she said. "I never expected to see *you* back here, that I didn't!"

She couldn't resist saying that, although she knew it to be improper. She was too deeply affronted by the presence of this creature here, and by the necessity for waiting upon her.

Angelica wasn't offended.

"No," she said, "I dare say you didn't; but you'll be still more surprised when I tell you I'm going to marry Mr. Eddie."

"Oh, are you!" said Annie politely, with raised eyebrows.

"And coming back here to live," Angelica went on, with a rather pitiful effort to win some sort of friendly interest.

"I sha'n't be here long myself. I'm going to be married, too."

"That's nice! When? Tell me about it."

"It wouldn't interest *you*."

"Yes, it would. Is he the same one?"

"Of course he is! I'm not one to be chopping and changing. Once I've given my word, I stand by it."

This, very obscurely, was intended as a reproach to Angelica, and Angelica, though not conscious of any breach of faith in such a connection, felt none the less guilty before the righteous Annie.

"I know," she said. "Well, I hope you'll be happy, Annie."

"I dare say I will. It can't be too soon for me. The way things have changed here—I never saw the like!"

"How have they changed?" Angelica inquired.

"There's that Courtland sitting up-stairs at the table with them, and me expected to wait on him. Her 'war secretary,' she calls him. He's no more a secretary than I am. Secretaries write your letters for you, but Courtland—he couldn't write letters for any one. He's *ignorant*. And him to be set up above me, like this! And my young man's a sergeant already. Why isn't Courtland in the army, like his betters? Well!" she added piously. "They may be exalted above me now, but the time will come when they'll all be cast down so far below me I can't even so much as see them!"

And this meant Angelica, too. She was among the black sheep, the unworthy and the wicked, temporarily set above the righteous, only to be hurled down and utterly destroyed. Annie bade her good night with dour relish, in the sure and certain hope of a glorious triumph. She knew how it would be with this Angelica!

CHAPTER TWELVE

I

"Then why *did* you come here?" asked Vincent.

"Because your mother asked me," said Angelica.

Vincent shook his head.

"I don't believe you," he said. "You've got something up your sleeve. I know you! All your moves are calculated."

He turned away from her and began to walk up and down the piazza, where they had encountered each other quite alone, that early Sunday morning.

"No!" he insisted. "It's something to do with me. One of your damned Italian schemes!"

"It's nothing to do with you," said Angelica steadily. "Nothing at all. I don't bother myself about you any more."

He stopped directly in front of her and looked into her face with the vicious, sneering laugh she had once so dreaded; but now it troubled her not at all. She regarded him as a trained nurse might look at a troublesome patient, perfectly self-possessed and assured in her white linen frock and her trim hair.

It filled him with rage and hatred to see her so. He felt an uncontrollable wish to insult her, to talk to her outrageously, to force her to abandon this calmness, this superiority.

"You'd better bother about me!" he said. "You'd better remember that it's only through my pity for you that you're here. With half a word I could have you turned out of the house!"

She was imperturbable.

"I don't think so," she said. "I wanted to talk to you about this, anyway, and it might as well be now. I don't think Eddie would believe you, if you told him."

He laughed.

"My dearest girl, there's a living proof!"

"No," she said, looking steadily at him. "There isn't."

"What have you done? Murdered your baby, or sold it? That would suit your thrifty soul better. You do love money, don't you, Angelica, better than an inconvenient baby!"

"What baby?" she inquired.

"My God!" he cried, staring at her. "The impudence of the hussy! So that's the tack! You're going to lie out of it? Going to deny you ever had a child?"

"And how do you know I did? You never saw it, did you? How do you know it wasn't just a trick to get money out of you?"

That astounded him.

"Do you mean you dared to try that game on me? You little gutter-bred liar!" Suddenly he began to laugh. "But you didn't get much, did you?" he said.

Angelica smiled grimly.

"Now then!" she said. "Let's have it out! I'll own up that I don't want you to tell—that—to any one, and especially to Eddie. It would give me a lot of trouble; but it wouldn't spoil things. I have two good reasons for not worrying about being found out. In the first place, I'd deny it all, and I'm just as likely to be believed as you. You haven't got a name for being so awfully truthful, you know. I'd say you were making it up out of spite, because I wouldn't have you. And then I don't think you'd run the risk of telling Eddie. You're too fond of yourself. You know what would happen if he didn't believe you. He'd kick you out for telling such lies about me; and if he did believe you, he'd never forgive you. You'd never get any-

thing more from him. No; it wouldn't suit you a bit to get Eddie down on you!"

"So you think you're going to manage me like a marionette? You think you can make any sort of fool out of me?"

"You've made a fool of yourself," she said. She wanted to stop there, but she could not resist the terrible temptation to hurt, in her turn, this man who had hurt her so brutally. She didn't care if it were vulgar or if it were imprudent; she wanted only to hurt. "You made a regular fool of yourself," she went on. "You acted like a monkey—going down on your knees to me and raving the way you did. Do you remember?"

She was smiling a little—the subtle and cruel shadow of a smile.

"Don't you think you were a fool? So weak—first in one of your childish rages, and then crying and whining about your sins? And then beginning——"

"Never mind the means I used," he said. "I got what I wanted. I knew how to get you, and I knew how to get rid of you when I was tired of you."

No! It was too unequal a battle; she suffered too much. Every memory of that dead love was too bitter, too shameful, too full of a strange, heart-rending pain. He had all the advantage; she couldn't wound him as he could wound her. She was mortally stricken; but she wouldn't give up.

"You'll pay for all this!" she said. "I'll be the mistress here, and if you don't act as I please, out you'll go! I'll see that you're kept in order. You won't be able to fool Eddie when I'm here!"

He cursed her savagely.

"Go on!" she said, smiling. "I like it! I'm glad I've made you feel like this."

Vincent pulled himself up with a strong effort.

"Well," he said, "with all your melodramatic threats of revenge, you'll never be able to do me much harm—not a

hundredth part of the harm I've done you. You're ruined, no good!"

"Bah!" she cried. "You and your talk about ruining me! *Am* I ruined? Do I *look* any worse? Am I worse in any way at all?"

"Yes!" he said. "You are, and you know it."

He gave her one bright, fierce, scornful look, and, vaulting over the piazza railing, walked off across the lawn.

Angelica sank back in her chair.

"Oh, Lord!" she murmured, with a sob. "That was so awful! Oh, I do wish I could go home now, without having to see him again—ever!"

She got up and went irresolutely to the door. What was she to do with herself to forget, to overcome her terrible emotion? She knew she needn't expect to see either Mrs. Russell or the doctor before lunch-time on Sunday, and it was now only ten o'clock. She didn't know what to do; she wanted only to be active and to be for a little time alone.

She was not at all fond of walking as a pastime, but she set out resolutely enough now, along the quiet country road, trying to fix her thoughts upon Sillon and Devery and all that frank and bright existence, and to forget this world, this house with its intolerable memories, this man, whose very existence was an outrage to her.

"I shouldn't have come!" she told herself. "I was a fool! I guess it can't be done. I guess you can't—get over a—thing like that."

And in spite of herself came the unwelcome and terrible thought:

"How will it be, then, when you are married to Eddie and living in that house and seeing Vincent every day?"

She tried to escape from it. She walked faster, farther; but the walk did her no good. There was nothing in the country landscape to divert her thoughts, nothing to interest her. She had the purposeful gait of the city dweller; she wanted to get somewhere, and she wanted to be startled

into attention with fascinating shop-windows, blazing signs, things and people always passing her. The quiet, all about, made the sound of her own firm step on the macadam road annoyingly loud and regular. The bright, clear sky overhead, the leaves somberly brilliant in their glorious death, filled her with impatience and loneliness. She turned back.

And the first living creature she saw on the road was Vincent, coming to meet her.

She didn't falter. They went on, nearer and nearer to each other, steadily, rapidly; but her heart began to beat with suffocating violence.

"Maybe he'll try to kill me," she thought. "It's so lonely here—and he hates me so! Well, I guess that's the best thing that could happen to me!"

But as he drew near, he held out his hand.

"Angelica!" he cried. "Oh, Angelica, *why* did I speak that way to you? When I've been longing and longing——"

"Better stop!" she said. "I'd rather have you talk that way than any other."

He had turned and was walking by her side.

"Don't you see?" he said. "All this bitterness and wrangling—it's all part of the same thing—part of our love for each other. It's the exasperation, the rage, of frustration. When we're apart we suffer so, and in our suffering we blindly try to hurt each other."

"Do you mean to say you're trying to pretend that we *love* each other?" she cried.

"Yes," he said. "We do. We can't stop. We're mates. We complete each other. We're made for each other. Even when I'm hating you so that I could wring your neck, I know in my soul it's only a phase of love."

"Well," she said, "it's not, with me."

But she was trembling with a mysterious and unfathomable emotion—a wicked and irresistible feeling of kinship with this man. Not love, not tenderness, not any feeling

that she could name; only this conviction that they were bound up together, that they could never be strangers, that it was against nature that they should part.

"Marry Eddie, if you like," he went on. "I don't care. You're mine. You can be his wife; it won't matter. You won't love him. You'll love *me*. I'll be your lover!"

Her face flamed.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh! You're the wickedest man that ever lived!"

"I'm not wicked!" he protested with earnestness. "The wickedness lies in your going to Eddie after you've loved me—in your faithlessness."

"My faithlessness!" she cried.

"It was you who left me," he reminded her.

She was amazed at this very characteristic turn which he had given to their talk. That he should pose as the injured one! But her pride forbade her to mention her wrongs.

"It's no use talking," she said. "It's all over now. The less we see of each other, the better satisfied I'll be."

They had reached the gates of Buena Vista, and Vincent appeared unwilling to be seen with Angelica.

"I'm going farther," he said. "But, Angelica, I won't let you go!"

II

The visit was altogether a disappointment. Angelica had imagined that it would be a sort of triumph for her, that she could at least a little exult over these "rich people"; but, after all, it was nothing but an obvious condescension on their part. She hadn't conquered them; they had accepted her voluntarily—not reluctantly, but rather graciously.

It was a tiresome day. Mrs. Russell's cordiality had evaporated overnight, and she was bored and yawning. She

lay in a deck chair on the piazza, rustling through the Sunday papers, and talking to Angelica now and then with outrageously forced politeness. She had an air which Angelica knew of old; when one of her fits of ennui came on her, she all but pushed her bewildered guests out of the door.

But Angelica stayed until after supper. That was what she had planned to do, and what she was determined to do. She too sat on the piazza with a Sunday paper, concealing her sullenness.

There wasn't any supper, properly speaking. Annie was out, and Mrs. Russell said that their new custom was to help themselves from the ice-chest—a plan which might have been jolly if the people had been a little less hostile. They stood about in the immaculate kitchen with plates in their hands, Mrs. Russell yawning, the doctor subdued, Angelica severe, and Courtland embarrassed and aggrieved. Vincent wasn't there. There was beer and cold chicken and ham and salad and tarts.

“And coffee if you want to make it,” Mrs. Russell said; but no one did.

After this, Angelica took her leave. Courtland was suddenly deprived of his secretarial dignity and ordered peremptorily to drive her to the station, which he did in complete silence. He never ceased to resent this seesawing, by which he was one moment the promising young man being trained as a secretary and treated with immense, if not maternal, indulgence, and the next minute was a servant and a rather rudely treated one. He endured it with wonder and disgust.

Angelica was able now to gratify a long-cherished desire—she was traveling in the style which she had so much admired in suburban ladies. It was, of course, out of the question to expect Courtland to help her on the train. Nothing in the world could have induced him to do so; but at least she was able to alight from a motor, to buy three or four magazines and a box of sweets, and enter the train,

thus burdened, with the proper air. She sat down near a window and opened a magazine.

A hand covered the page.

"Angie!" said a voice, and she looked up into Vincent's laughing face.

She couldn't repress a smile herself—a sudden throb of joy; that exquisite feeling of comradeship again.

"Are you glad to see me?" he asked.

"No. Why should I be?"

"You can spare this one little evening for me," he said, "no matter what wonderfully upright sort of future you're planning. It won't hurt any one. I'll be irreproachable. I won't make any demands, any requests. I won't evoke old memories. Before we say good-by, let me have a few hours with the old Angelica—my beloved, reckless, adorable Angelica. Just to make a memory!"

"No; we better not!" she said.

It might well, she thought, make a memory which would last far, far too long.

"Why not, Angelica?"

"I don't want to, Vincent, that's all."

He didn't urge her; he sat quietly beside her, suddenly dejected. The train ran on past dark woods, wide fields, lighted houses; stopped at lively little stations with their lines of motors—that world of bourgeois smartness which Angelica so admired. It turned her thoughts again to Eddie, and to all that she would gain through Eddie. *She* would be coming home to one of these little stations, met by her own motor, to be whirled off to her own lovely home, with servants to wait on her, with dignity, security, peace!

And a sudden disarming pity for Vincent rushed over her—poor Vincent who had nothing to give. She glanced cautiously at his face, gloomy, perplexed, his eyes clouded with a sort of hungry dissatisfaction. He couldn't help but look bold all the time, but even that boldness was pitiful to

her who knew his weakness, his faults, his vices, his follies. She had never felt so sorry for any one else.

"Walk home with me, if you like," she said.

They came out into the bewildering brilliance of Forty-Second Street side by side, and began walking east, slowly, in that astonishing hurly-burly of crowds, of glittering signs winking, flashing, pouring out into the night sky a flood of radiance, of hurrying taxis, immense motor-cars, trolleys, strings of fiercely lighted little shops, the windows filled with inane and shamelessly overpriced trinkets and souvenirs; noise, blinding light, crowds and crowds of people.

"Let's turn down Madison Avenue," suggested Vincent.

"That's out of my way."

"But you're in no hurry. Please!"

She consented; she had no particular reason for not doing so. He took her arm as they turned into the darker, quieter street, and went on with her so, like a young lover, his head turned toward her, listening eagerly, watching her face.

"Now tell me about it," he said. "Tell me what it is that's made you change so."

She didn't answer.

"It was you, and all the 'dreadful pain you caused me," she thought, but without bitterness; with only immeasurable sadness and regret that it should have been so.

"I've been working with two very nice girls," she said aloud. "They've helped me, and I've learned a lot from them."

He asked her a great many questions. He was really interested in it all, and in the effect of this commercial adventure upon her crude soul. It was the first time any one had shown a real interest in her heart and her mind. He didn't care so much about what she *did*, as what she *felt*. She could not help talking freely, with a sense of great relief. All the observation of her shrewd and intelligent mind, so friendless and so little understood, came to her lips now—

not the naïve egoism of a young girl in love, but the wit, the vigour, the soundness of a woman of character.

They turned into Fifth Avenue at Twenty-Third Street, and went on down-town, for Angelica had promised to show Vincent her millinery shop.

"There!" she said with pride.

They stood in the silent and deserted square, looking at the house, at the peacock, at the windows where in the light of the street-lamp the purple letters of "Angélique" might be deciphered.

A clock struck eleven.

"I'll have to hurry home," said Angelica. "Mother'll worry."

She was reluctant, for she had been happy in her fool's paradise. Of course it couldn't last, this friendly communion with the man she found above all other people in the world supremely interesting, supremely attractive. She knew all about him, she didn't trust him; but it was something just to be with him, so happily, for this one last time.

All the old magic came flowing back into her heart, there in the tiny park, with the dead leaves blowing down the paths, and a sharp white moon to be seen now and then as the wispy clouds drew across it. That yearning for his sympathy, for his love, positively tormented her. She longed and longed to draw near to him, to feel his arm about her.

As always, his instinct warned him of his moment. His hold on her arm tightened.

"Don't go!" he said. "Let's have just this hour! Angelica, imagine—if we had a little room here, some little place all to ourselves! And I'd wait at home for you, and write and dream about you, and long for you all day, while you sat there in your shop, bending your dear, dark head over your work. You'd work for me, until I grew famous—and then I'd make a queen—an empress of you, my beloved woman!"

"Don't begin that!" she entreated. "We've had such a nice time!"

"But think of it! Think of sitting together in the dark, in our poor little room, our arms about each other, weary, harassed, finding our joy and consolation only in those hours together—living just for that! Oh, Angelica! Angelica! Hasn't this long, weary parting been just an interlude? Can't we begin again? Take me back! Forgive me and love me and make me over. Make me what you wish. Come back to me! Come back to me! I need you so terribly!"

"Don't!" she begged again, profoundly troubled. "I don't know how to tell you—how to make you see how useless it is. I can't—I don't feel as I used to. All that is dead. I'll never care that way for any one again."

"For me you can!"

She shook her head dumbly.

"Vincent, you've done me enough harm. For God's sake, let me alone! Now, just when I'm struggling up out of the mud, you come and try to pull me down. Right here, before this very house——"

She stopped, unable to explain, even to suggest to him all that Fine Feathers meant to her, how it was her honour, her dignity, friendship, self-respect, ambition.

"You see how I've changed," she said, "and how I've improved. Why don't you try to help me?"

"Changed?" he said, stooping to look into her face. "Not a bit of it, Angelica! You're nothing but my Angelica, my beloved girl, the mother of my child!"

"Oh, stop!" she cried. "Oh, it's too horrible!"

"It's too horrible that you should repudiate me. Angelica, let us take back our child and start again, a decent, honest life. You talk of improving yourself; why don't you think of improving me—of helping your poor little child? Let's help each other!"

"You wouldn't do it! You know you wouldn't!" she

cried. The tears were rolling down her cheeks unnoticed. "You've never even seen the poor little thing, or asked about him."

"But I've thought of him! I've been haunted by that little son—yours and mine. Oh, Angelica, don't, don't for God's sake, turn away from me! Polly will set me free, and I'll marry you and we will have our child again."

She felt as if she were sinking in a whirlpool. An intolerable pity for this man confused her, overwhelmed her.

Her troubled glance, leaving his beloved face, fell upon the ridiculous peacock with its jaunty little paper hat—fit image for her nightmare; and a little trickle of cold, sane daylight began to filter into her darkened and suffering mind.

"Angelica! Let us begin again, you and I and our little son——"

"No!" she cried in a ringing voice. "No!"

His face fell. He looked at her, startled.

"No!" she said again. "I'd never believe you—not a word you said. I won't forget! I'll *never* forget, and I'll never forgive what you've done. You're a liar! You're a beast! I hate you!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I

Angelica was working in the back parlour the next afternoon with Sillon when Devery brought her in a letter. She smiled ironically and tucked it into her blouse, for she knew the writing.

"I wonder how he'll be this time!" she reflected. "You can never tell. Maybe in an awful rage, or sad, or making love. Well, it doesn't matter to me now. I've finished with him! But I was really nearly gone last night."

She had stopped short in her work and sat looking vacantly before her.

"I don't know why I'm such a fool about that man. I don't know what it is about him!"

II

She didn't trouble to open his letter until she was ready to go home. Then, alone for a minute, she pulled it out and opened it, half sadly.

"No!" she cried suddenly. "No! I don't believe it."

"What is it?" Devery called out from the next room.

"Nothing!" said Angelica, with stiff lips.

She hid the letter in her blouse in terror at the idea of its being seen. Then she was forced to bring it out again, to read it, to make sure.

Wanton, without a heart! You thing from the gutter, willing to give your body to any man, while you keep your cold and poisonous heart to yourself, for your own sordid aims! I swear to you I will never let you destroy Eddie as you have me. It would be an outrage to call you sister, to permit you to bear our name. I would rather die. And I shall die. I have enlisted in the army. I shall soon be sent to France, and I shall find Eddie there and tell him your little history. Then I shall die. Nothing on earth can stop me. It will be the supreme moment of my life when I tell Eddie, when I see his face, and know that your shameless ends are frustrated—when I know that you are really ruined.

“He won’t do it!” she tried to reassure herself. “He’s always making threats. He wouldn’t really do anything that might harm himself.”

But she knew that Vincent didn’t always act from self-interest. His passions were very apt to overwhelm him, and malice was one of the strongest of his passions. He would enjoy exquisitely telling the wretched tale to Eddie.

For three months she didn’t draw a free breath. She tried to dismiss her terror from her mind. She said to herself, resolutely: “Don’t borrow trouble!” “Don’t worry about what may never happen!” “Don’t cross your bridges before you come to them,” and all sorts of tags from her mother’s store. She faced Devery and Sillon every morning with the same hardy good-humour. She was dutiful and severe at home, as had become her custom, and to no living soul did she give the smallest hint of what she was enduring.

Every time a letter came from Eddie, or if a mail were missed, she expected the blow to fall, all her laboriously made plans to be destroyed, her pride and dignity trampled underfoot, all her life wrecked. She was utterly in the dark. She had no idea what was going on, or what had already happened, and she could take no steps to gain information. She could do nothing but wait.

Then came another letter from Vincent:

I am home on leave. That means that we shall very soon be going over. Good-by, Angelica! I have a hard, bitterly hard task before me. I must hurt Eddie and I must hurt you. As for me, there is nothing before me but death. Deserted and ruined as I am, I long for death. Your love was all that pleased me in life. With that gone, there is nothing but a waste, bleak beyond endurance. I shall only beg Eddie to forgive my vile treachery, as I beg you to forgive my sins against you. Forget your presumptuous and wicked dream of marrying that good man. That can never be. He will forgive you, as he will forgive me, but he will never forget.

Good-by, Angelica. I give you to God!

VINCENT.

Asleep and awake that picture haunted her—a vision of Eddie, mud-stained, horribly pale, sitting on a box, with a candle flickering on the ground beside him, in a dugout with mud walls and great puddles of filthy water—the sort of thing she had seen in the cinema, ghastly, desolate, with an incessant play of rockets and bursting shells overhead; and Vincent standing before him in one of his fine attitudes, so handsome, so strong, so noble, telling him. She knew how he would dwell upon the details, with what colour he would describe her caresses, her kisses, heightening the temptation just as he would heighten his remorse.

It didn't occur to her that Vincent might encounter some obstacles to a prompt meeting with his brother, with all the different services and all the vast battlefield to be considered. She fancied him being at once directed to Eddie's dugout like a stranger in a village.

She lived in a long nightmare. She didn't know how the blow would fall—whether she would come home to find a letter from Eddie, casting her off; whether Mrs. Russell would be there to tell her; whether she would have a letter from some stranger, a friend of Eddie's—a lawyer, perhaps. But what she most feared was the idea of coming to Fine Feathers some morning and seeing Sillon and Devery suddenly turned hostile. She felt that she could not bear that. It would do for her.

But weeks went by, and nothing at all happened. One

day, while she was in the back parlour, she heard Mrs. Russell's voice in the front room; but the very tone of it reassured her. She wanted to buy a hat, and she wanted Angelica to let her have it cheap; so she was extraordinarily agreeable. She had, moreover, some sort of idea that it would help Angelica in the eyes of her partners to be seen in friendly converse with a lady like herself.

"I wish you'd come and see me!" she said. "I'm so lonely! They've all gone—Vincent, you know, and now poor Courtland's been drafted. Dear me! It does seem as if they ought to be able to make up a big enough army out of those who wanted to fight, without dragging in the unwilling ones. Poor Courtland will make a very bad soldier; he hates it so. He's too independent. Vincent was really marvelous. If you could have seen him in his uniform! And he told me to be sure, if I saw you, to tell you not to forget him. He even went to Polly and begged her to be reconciled to him before he left, perhaps never to return. I went to see her, too, to see if I could influence her; but what do you think? She's adopted a baby, and she's wrapped up in it. She says it fills her life, and she doesn't want any one else. She's very hard on Vincent. Those frightfully maternal women always are dreadfully hard on men, don't you think? I'm not surprised at her adopting a child; she was so absorbed in the one she lost. I couldn't do a thing with her. She said she had done with Vincent. Poor boy! She's narrow—provincial. Awfully selfish, don't you think?"

"I don't know," said Angelica. "I suppose she can't help how she feels."

"Well, I thought it was horrible to see her there, so happy with that baby, and so callous about her husband. Not even her own baby—some little waif she's picked up. It's a wretched, puny little thing, too; she has to give it the most unceasing care. I shouldn't be surprised to hear any day

that she's lost it. Oh, my dear! What's that heavenly mass of purple?"

"That's a negligée I'm making," said Devery, thus addressed.

"Could I possibly wear purple?" inquired Mrs. Russell earnestly. "Do please let me see it! Oh, how *marvelous!* Could I *possibly* slip it on?"

"Am I *hideous?*" she asked Angelica anxiously, when she had got the purple garment on and stood before the long mirror.

"It's not quite your style," said Angelica, with great seriousness. "I think—but Miss Devery will give you suggestions."

"A dark green," said Devery, "with dull, blackish blue overtones—not a floating thing like this, Mrs. Russell. You're slender enough to stand a straight, narrow garment. Not exactly a negligée; I never advise them, there's so little use in them; but what I call a boudoir gown."

"How much would it cost?" asked Mrs. Russell.

"One hundred dollars," said Devery.

Mrs. Russell looked at her, then at Angelica. They both had their professional manners, polite, deeply interested, but firm. There was no mercy to be had from them. She ordered the gown; then she bought a "sports hat" of Angelica for a staggering sum, and prepared to take her leave.

But now Miss Sillon came in, pleasant and businesslike.

"I'd be very pleased to make you a ten per cent discount, madam," she said; "or for any one personally introduced by our Miss Kennedy."

"Oh, Sillon!" said Angelica, when she had gone. "Wasn't that nice of you? You can't imagine how anything like that pleases her."

"Angélique, my child, we'd do more than that for you," said Sillon.

III

"Telephone, Mlle. Angélique!" cried Devery.

"Would you mind asking who? I've just got this thing pinned."

"It's Mrs. Geraldine," Devery called. "Can't you come?" Angelica's heart stood still.

"*This* is it!" she thought. "Now it's come!"

She went with leaden feet to the telephone in the back room, and sat down before it. She stared at the instrument for an instant in horror. What was it about to reveal?

She took up the receiver.

"Yes!" she said. "Is this you, Mrs. Geraldine?"

"Can you come to see me?" said that well-known voice. "There's something——"

"*Why?*" she cried. "What is it? Is anything wrong?"

"The baby's quite well; but there's a piece of news you ought to know."

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh, tell me! What?"

"Don't lose your head, Angelica; but come when you can. I'll be in all the afternoon. And don't worry. It's only that I think you ought to know before all the others."

She didn't wait to hear the rest. She left the telephone and turned to her friends a distracted and blanched face.

"I've got to go!" she said.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Sillon kindly, alarmed by her look.

"Yes! I've got to go!"

"Can't I go with you?"

"No, no, no!"

Angelica was pinning on her hat, without even a glance in the mirror, and was starting out when Devery stopped her.

"Your bag!" she said. "Or are you coming back to-day?"

"Never!" she cried. "Never!"

They stood together watching her go.

"Poor kid!" said Devery. "It must be something *very* wrong!"

Angelica was out of sight, hurrying along the street, trembling with eagerness to embrace this anguish, to get it over, to be done with her torment.

She rang Polly's bell, and Polly herself admitted her visitor. She looked ill and haggard, with eyes heavy and dull, and reddened with sleeplessness—or was it with tears?

"Come in," she said pleasantly. "Sit down, Angelica. Will you have a cup of tea?"

"Oh, *no!*" she cried. "Hurry up and tell me! They all know it? Eddie's written! Oh, Mrs. Geraldine, I knew right away! Eddie's written to say that Vincent's told him. Oh, my God! He said he would, and he has! That's what he went for. Oh, my God! All my life ruined! Oh, Mrs. Geraldine!"

"My dear, try to calm yourself," said Polly. "There—sit down. You're making yourself ill. Vincent hasn't told any one. He never will, Angelica."

"He said he would!"

"He never will. He's dead."

Her voice broke in a faint sob.

"*Dead?*" cried Angelica. "Vincent? In the war?"

"The transport he was on, struck a mine."

"Then he never got there? He never told Eddie?"

"No."

"Oh, Mrs. Geraldine!" she cried. "Then I'm *safe!*"

Polly turned away.

"Don't you feel *sorry?*" she asked. "He was very young to die."

Angelica shook her head.

"No, I can't," she said; "not just now. I can't feel anything but glad."

IV

She stopped on her way home to tell Sillon and Devery that "it was all right." She let them know, modestly, that there was a certain person now in France in whom she was profoundly interested, and that she had feared some bad news in regard to him. Then she went to a quiet little restaurant and ate a delicious little dinner all alone, and in the chilly, cloudy evening walked home—a long walk.

She was enjoying a feeling of exquisite and complete triumph. She had won! She was safe now, her troubles over. Certainly God had helped her. She was young, beautiful, beloved; she was about to be rich. She had made a gallant fight against great odds, and she had conquered.

She greeted her mother with unusual affection and was willing to talk with her for quite a time, about her business, about the shortcomings of the tenants, about everything in the world except what had happened. That she didn't mention.

She began slowly to undress while her mother was still in the kitchen, ironing a collar for her to wear the next day. She looked at herself in the mirror, in her dainty camisole—a beautiful woman, with her delicate bare arms, her slender shoulders, her curious, glowing black eyes in her pale and lovely face——

And suddenly, almost as if she saw it in the glass beside her own, another face, fierce, hawk-like, rigid and white, with bright hair spread out and floating as if in the sea. Her dead lover!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I

The parlour now rejoiced in a new and pretty little "set," put in there only the week before in order to receive the visits of Eddie. On one of the chairs sat Mrs. Kennedy, dressed in silk, her hair skilfully fluffed by her daughter, her hands manicured, her feet in soft new boots. She was well aware that she had never looked so common, so perfectly the janitress and scrubwoman. Her strained, haggard face, her faded eyes, her blunted and withered hands belied her fine attire. They could have belonged only to a woman who had worked brutally and hopelessly. She was years younger than Mrs. Russell, but she might have passed for her mother.

Her patient hands were folded in her silken lap; she had nothing to do, and very little to think about. The blasphemous triumph was accomplished; she was about to see Sin crowned and rewarded, Innocence betrayed and abandoned—in other words, Angelica married to Eddie. She was disgusted with life, thoroughly disappointed with her God. She took no pleasure in these preparations, or in any of the comforts and enjoyments before her. Nothing sustained her but a vague sort of hope that her just God would retrieve Himself by stopping this wedding in some way—with thunderbolts, or the flaming swords of archangels. And she was well aware that one couldn't really count upon anything of that sort.

Out in the kitchen she could hear the servant—she, the charwoman, servant of servants, sitting in the parlour while another woman drudged for her! In half an hour an automobile was coming to take them to the church, and then they

were going off to Buena Vista, going to leave all this poverty and humiliation behind forever. She had been given to understand that she wasn't to *live* with her child, only to visit until a suitable home could be found for her. She was to have an apartment and a servant all of her own; she was to furnish the place as she wished, and she was to be provided with a new wardrobe.

"And start a new life," Angelica told her.

"I'll need to!" said Mrs. Kennedy. "This one is about done."

And although a great deal of this was paid for by Angie herself, out of the money she had saved, her mother had never expressed gratitude. She didn't feel any. She had never at any moment of her life been so utterly dissatisfied.

She glanced at the new clock.

"Angie!" she called. "What are you doing?"

"Dressing!" called back a gay, a too gay voice.

"He'll be here in half an hour."

"I'll be ready!"

II

She was standing before the mirror in the bedroom, adjusting her hat, very delicately touching her hair under its net, tilting her head from side to side, frowning thoughtfully, trying to foresee the effect she would produce upon Sillon and Devery, Mrs. Russell and Polly, who would be in the church. She pictured herself and Eddie walking up the aisle—Eddie still in uniform, tall, severe, impressive, and beside him his beautiful young bride. She was wearing a plain dark brown broadcloth suit, a big black hat, and a magnificent set of silver fox furs Eddie had given her. She looked like a princess. They couldn't, any of them, find a flaw in her—in her appearance or in her bearing. None of those born ladies could approach her. She looked what

she was determined actually to be, the equal of any one of them. There was a position ready for her, and she was competent to fill it.

Eddie had been so delighted with the change in her. She hadn't seen much of him since his return at the end of the war, but all his hours with her had been a perpetual service of praise. He had hurried to her his first free minute; he had wanted to give her anything, everything—extravagantly and ridiculously. He had been tactful and kindly with the rather contemptuous Mrs. Kennedy. He had been to see Devery and Sillon, and had won their hearts. He had been quite perfect.

And all these thoughts were merely flitting across her mind like birds flying above a frozen pond. Under the ice were horrors beyond naming. She did her utmost to ignore them, to think of those things as dead and buried and forever gone from her world; but she could not.

All that night she had been dreaming of her drowned lover, floating, horribly, in the sea; and with him, directly beside him, her baby—their baby—its little body extended like his, its tiny white face upturned. And she and Eddie sat on the deck of a ship, she facing these two corpses which came smoothly along behind them, and she was using all her wit, all her charm, to keep Eddie from turning his head and seeing them.

The dream haunted her and mingled with her wretched thoughts. For now that she was within a stone's throw of her goal, now that the cup was in her hand, to be raised to her lips, she was filled with a desperate impatience, a terrible fever of haste and fear. Her hands were burning, her knees weak and trembling.

"Oh, just this one more hour!" she murmured. "If only, only, *only* nothing will happen!"

She looked past the moment, to the haven of happy years beyond, as a man sailing a perilous channel might look ahead to the wide and quiet sea beyond.

"Something will happen!" she told herself. "At the last minute some one will tell him—scream it out in the church—stop the wedding. Oh, God! Just help me now! Let me get safely married to Eddie, and I'll try my best to be good!"

She was conscious of being a little too pallid, too worn, and she rubbed on her smooth cheeks a little rouge. It looked horrible, and she wiped it off frantically.

"No! It must be my eyes that look so queer. I wonder if Eddie'll notice, and think I look queer! It might make him suspicious."

She forced herself to smile.

"Of course I'm nervous," she said. "Every one is. It's nothing—nothing at all!"

She suppressed a scream when the door-bell rang. She listened, behind her half-closed door, until she heard Eddie's voice talking quite in his usual tone to her mother. No one called her. Nothing had happened.

She stood still, in a sort of daze, getting no further forward in her dressing, until her mother entered the room.

"He's going to take me down and put me in the auto," said Mrs. Kennedy. "Then he's coming back after you. You'd better hurry. It's late, and I don't see any use for you to be keeping all those people waiting. That's not a very good way to begin."

"All right!" said her daughter hurriedly. "Go on, mother!"

She set to work in haste to add the finishing touches to her dress, fastening the little bar pin with diamonds given her by Mrs. Russell, drawing on her white kid gloves.

She heard him coming. She heard him stop at the kitchen door, and tell the woman working in the kitchen that she might go. Then he came and knocked at her door.

"Ready, Angelica?" he called out.

She gave one glance in the mirror; then she opened the door with a forced, polite smile. There stood the poor

soldier who wished to give her all he had—poor, ardent Eddie, longing so to take her back to his beloved home, and give it into her keeping. He stood in the doorway of her little room, looking at her, and he too was smiling—a smile as strained, as artificial as her own.

“Angelica!” he said softly.

He had grown quite pallid, as he did when deeply moved, and his hands clenched and unclenched nervously. His face, his expression, had changed. He was struggling his utmost to look, and to be, tender and respectful; but his heart was beating with an emotion neither tender nor respectful. He wiped his damp forehead, and came a step nearer, always smiling, but with eyes strangely brilliant and fixed.

“No!” said Angelica sharply. She knew how he felt—she knew too well how he felt. It sickened and shamed her.

“My darling girl!” said Eddie. “My Angelica!”

“Don’t!” she said. “Don’t say that! I’m not!”

“But you will be, very soon! I——”

“We ought to go, Eddie. It’s late!”

“Then kiss me, just once!”

She shook her head with a ghastly affectation of coquetry.

“No,” she said. “You’ll have to wait!”

“Just as you like, Angelica,” said the poor fellow. “You know, don’t you, dear girl, that my chief wish in life is to make you happy? I wouldn’t for——”

“Then do come on, or I’ll think you don’t want to marry me at all!”

He turned instantly, and she followed him—just to the door of her room; but no farther. He looked back.

“Aren’t you ready?” he asked.

“Eddie!” she cried in a high, dreadful voice. “Eddie! *I can’t do it!*”

“Can’t do what?” he asked, startled.

“I can’t do it! I can’t marry you! Not unless I tell you!”

He stared at her for an instant, his quick and clear mind at work upon this.

"What is there to tell me?" he asked. "Let's have it!" He was alert and suspicious now. "Come on! Let's have it!" he repeated.

"Eddie!" she began, but a great horror at her own folly assailed her.

She felt impelled toward this abyss, while she struggled madly to turn aside, aghast at the destruction before her. Perhaps even now it wasn't too late; perhaps she could disarm the suspicion that she had aroused, could stop, and not tell him any more.

Thank God, it wasn't too late! She *hadn't* told him. She felt like a person cutting his own throat—the knife had only pricked—he is still alive, and in a mad exultation of thankfulness.

She smiled.

"I—I got engaged to another fellow," she said; "but it's all over now."

"When? Who was it?"

"Last year."

"Who was it, I say?"

"He was—a—a factory superintendent," said Angelica. "But it's all over now. I'm awfully, awfully sorry, Eddie."

"You mean you—engaged yourself to this fellow while I was in France? After you'd promised to marry me?"

"I know it was—wrong; but I hope you'll forgive me, Eddie!"

"Yes," he said, "I forgive you, Angelica; but oh, how *could* you? I'm so disappointed in you! It was so dishonourable! It was—low."

"I know! I know! I know!" she cried, with an uncontrollable impatience. "But—forgive me and forget all about it. I'm so sorry. What more can I say?"

"Did he—did you let him—kiss you?"

"Yes!" she murmured.

"Angelica!"

"Oh, but I'm *sorry!*" she cried desperately.

Eddie stood looking at the floor for an instant; then, with fierce suddenness, he caught her by the arm and pulled her forward, so that he could look into her face.

"Look here!" he shouted. "How far did this thing go?"

"It was nothing!" she cried.

"You said he kissed you. You said you were engaged to him. Some coarse, common brute of a workman mauling you—I know those people—I know their love-making. God, Angelica! You make me *sick!* You've no fineness, no—decency!" he cried.

He searched her face with eyes that terrified her.

"I don't believe you," he said suddenly.

"But, Eddie——" she stammered.

"I don't believe you!" he said again. "You're lying. This fellow was your lover!"

"Oh, don't!" she cried.

"Answer me! Tell me the truth!"

"No! I did! I did tell you the truth. There was nothing—like that."

"Swear it! Say, 'I swear to God I was absolutely faithful to you all the time you were away.'"

His eyes never left her face; but she repeated, firmly:

"I swear to God I was absolutely faithful to you all the time you were away."

He looked puzzled. He sat down heavily in a chair and covered his eyes with his hand.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to be so rough. Only—it's a terrible disappointment to me, Angelica. I never imagined such a thing. I almost wish you hadn't told me. I keep seeing you and some hulking fellow in overalls——"

She was sobbing bitterly, standing before him like a forlorn and penitent child.

"Don't cry!" he said more kindly. "Don't cry, my dear. I'll try to forget it. I'll try!"

"Will it—not make any difference?" she sobbed.

"I'll try not to let it. Only, Angelica—it was often so hard—over there—not to—so hard to be true to you—not even to think of any one else; and when I think of it, and how I hated myself, even for my thoughts—I feel like a *fool*. I don't believe you'd have cared *what* I did. You don't feel as I do. You don't value loyalty as I do."

She seized this opening.

"No!" she cried. "I shouldn't have cared, one bit, whatever you did, if only we love each other now!"

"No, don't! I don't like to hear you say that. I want you to care, as I do. I want you to be fine and—high-minded."

"Eddie, I'm not. There's no use pretending that I am."

"I don't want you to pretend to be. I want you to try to be."

"I will!"

He was silent for a time.

"Now, then!" he said. "It won't do to keep them all waiting any longer. Are you quite ready?"

"Do you mean for us to get married just the same?"

"Of course!" he said. "I couldn't be such a prig. I've simply got to forget what you've told me, and thank Heaven that I've got you after all. You might have married the fellow!"

He was his own kind self again, but she could see that his great pride in her, his great joy, were gone.

"Come!" he said again. "We shall be very late."

But she prevented him from leaving. She caught him by the arm and stood before him, looking up into his face.

"Eddie!" she cried, with a gasp that seemed to tear her heart out. "I've *got* to! I can't deceive you. Oh, *God!* It's so awful!"

He didn't move or speak.

"Eddie," she said, "it *was* that!"

"Ah, it was!" he said, in a tone of polite surprise.

"I had a baby."

A shudder ran through him, and he closed his eyes in mortal pain.

"You can't ever know what I suffered! Oh, Eddie, Eddie, I've been punished enough for what I did! And the poor little baby——"

"Never mind!" he said, in a voice so low that she could hardly hear him. "Don't tell me any more. I don't want to know." He undid her fingers from his arm. "I want to get away," he said. "Good-by!"

But she stopped him again.

"And the man was *Vincent!*" she screamed. "Now! Now! *Now* you know!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The next morning, just at the usual hour, Angelica entered the back parlour, where Sillon and Devery were working side by side. They both looked up in a sort of stern surprise, and waited for her to speak first.

She stood before them, a quivering smile on her lips. She seemed on the verge of tears; but after a silent moment she raised her eyes to look at them with a sublime and touching bravery.

“Can I come back?” she asked.

They were both speechless.

“I don’t want to explain,” she said, in a trembling voice. “Not ever! But if I can come back, I’ll—go on—just the same.”

Miss Sillon got up.

“Certainly!” she said pleasantly. “If you like, we’ll go on—in the old way. We’ll forget all this. Don’t you think so, Devery?”

“Of course!” said Devery.

But no matter how they tried, their cordiality was strained, their looks averted. They knew, all three of them, that it would be a long time before this thing could be forgotten. Half of the letters of “Angélique” had gone from the windows—and how much more had gone as well?

But at least their friendship endured. They neither questioned her nor blamed her; they simply took her back, as whole-heartedly as was possible to them. Whatever incredible and discreditable occurrence may have interrupted that dazzling wedding, they would not repudiate her.

She went to her cupboard, took out the box in which she had kept her odds and ends, and, sitting down at her old table, spread out the glittering, gay scraps before her.

“I’m going to stick to business now!” she said, with a sob.

THE END



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